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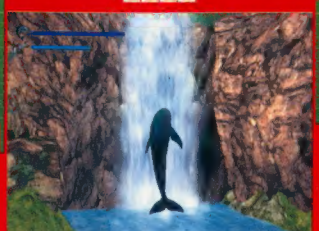

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SEGA SPORTS

NFL 2K1

Online gameplay is here. Now you and up to three buds can get on one console and school opponents nationwide -- from pathetic Cowboys sympathizers in Tulsa to masochistic Bills fans in Schenectady. You can even exchange "pleasantries" in real time. Throw in a radically improved running game, franchise mode, and complete team-specific playbooks, and you've got yourself a full-contact chat room. Does technology rule or what?

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Dreamcast.

IT'S THINKING

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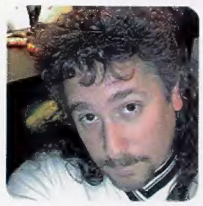

GAMERS' REPUBLIC MANIFESTO

This past July was one of the most pivotal months we've had as a team since we started GAMERS' REPUBLIC back in '97. July's revelations were supposed to have taken place many months ago when the PS2 debuted in Japan, but instead we were greeted by seemingly flawed hardware and a slew of games we couldn't wait to forget. Things began to look up at E3, although only slightly, and then suddenly within the span of a week, six mind-blowing games assailed our office space. Things got under way with the sequel to one of our all-time favorite space shooters (remember those), Silpheed, which we simply cannot stop playing, and Gun Griffon Blaze, both from the masters at Game Arts—with an assist on Silpheed: The Lost Planet by none other than Treasure! Next, we caught a glimpse of the next level of vehicular mayhem, Smuggler's Run and Midnight Club. All of these exhibited effects and/or engines that we had never seen before, although none even come close to maxing out the hardware's potential. Next came two of EA's initial offerings—X Squad, a great-looking action-adventure game, and SSX Snowboarding, a game that is so gorgeous your brain can barely process the information your eyes are feeding it. Now that we're starting to see what's on the horizon, things have certainly gotten much more interesting.

Not that this month didn't have its usual share of Dreamcast moments. Grandia 2, which came in just as we put the issue to bed, is simply breathtaking; Cannon Spike is pure addiction; and V-Rally does everything but throw mud in your lap. On top of all of these revelations, news that Mario Kart and Silent Hill—Silent Hill!—are going to be shown for the Game Boy Advance at Space World helped make July a month we'll never forget.

As the big picture comes into view, the Xbox and Star Cube have yet to chime in, but if what we're seeing now is any indication, it's a safe bet that playing video games is about to become America's new favorite pastime.

SEPTEMBER 2000

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GR VOL. 3 ISSUE # 4

TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
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CANNON SPIKE .18

Capcom proves once again that they are the reigning king of arcade-style gaming. Pulling characters from some of their most beloved series, they have created a game that not only plays well but is vastly re-playable and harnesses some of the best-looking polygonal graphics we've ever seen.

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Some of the best games are those that come out of nowhere, with no warning, no anticipation. Here is such a game, an action extravaganza that showcases the amazing capabilities of the PS2.

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MONTHLY GAMING NEWS

FRONTLINES

PORTABLE HORROR & RACING BLISS...

As this issue goes to press, Nintendo's Space World 2000 show, held August 25-27 in Japan, is just around the corner. Nintendo is expected to officially name their next system (probably as Star Cube) and, like they did with the N64's debut, show the unit under glass and perhaps gameplay on video.

The big treat at the show should be the debut of the Game Boy Advance, which we at GR fully expect to be God's gift to 2D and portable gaming. Nintendo has announced a preliminary list of the first- and third-party games that will be at the show, perhaps the most exciting of which is Mario Kart Advance. Though they haven't announced details yet, the prospect of a new Mario Kart game is always exciting. Nintendo will also showcase Kuru Kuru Kuru Rin, Ogon no taiyo (Golden Sun), and Napoleon. Konami, meanwhile, will show off Silent Hill, Golf Master, and Konami's Wacky Racing. That's right, Silent Hill. How the trouser-soiling terror of Silent Hill will translate to a portable system remains to be seen, but if anyone can do it, it's Konami.

For N64, Nintendo's lineup will include Mario Party 3 and Custom Robo V2, while third parties will show Rockman Dash: Adventure Spirits of Steel (Capcom), Dance Dance Revolution: Disney World Dancing Museum (Konami) and Modern War Simulation: Ultimate War (Media Factory).

The GBC still continues to be the Big N's biggest attraction, though, with over 50 games announced. The list includes The Legend of Zelda: Chapter of Gaia, Tennis GB Color, Zonar: Mystery Man, and The Legend of Stafi from Nintendo, four music games and Air Force Delta from Konami, Tales of Phantasia: Dungeon Mania (Namco), Star Ocean: Blue Sphere (Enix), the Wizardry trilogy (Ascii), and Harvest Moon 3 (Victor Interactive). Strangely, three hamster-themed games were also announced: Hamster Hamutaro: Operation Befriend (Nintendo), Hamster Club 2 (Jordan) and Hamster Club: Awasete Chu (Jordan).

Nintendo will also probably have several surprises lined up, so check back next issue for a full Space World 2000 report.

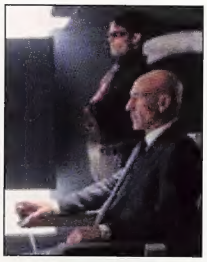
NINTENDO SPACE WORLD 2000

SQUARE'S A SELLOUT

Gamers turned up in droves for Square's latest Final Fantasy game, ensuring that the company will continue to thrive until the Earth perishes. Square shipped over 2.5 million copies of the $37 million Final Fantasy IX this July, making it one of the largest console releases of all time.

Though the pre-sales topped out a little lower than those for Final Fantasy VIII, the actual launch proved to be a watershed event, with literally a million hungry Final Fantasy fans turning up for their copy without a pre-order.

SCIENCE FRICTION...



Developed by the department of rehabilitation science and technology at the University of Pittsburgh, a wheelchair game device, called the "Gamewheels," allows debilitated users to play popular video games while improving their physical fitness. Built by department professor and chairman Rory Cooper, Ph.D., the system is mounted on portable rollers attached to the wheelchair, which send optical position and speed data to the interface board. The signals are transferred to the mouse, which manipulates the object onscreen as the operator maneuvers his wheelchair. In a two-phase study involving games like Need for Speed II and Ultimate Doom, participants actually reached an exercise-training zone for heart rate and breathing.

TIMELY LINK

If you're like us, you're crossing off the days on the calendar until October 26, 2000—the most anticipated day in video-game history. Sony says that, in addition to having the largest software library available at a new system's launch (no definite number yet, but expect 30 to 40 titles), there will be 1 million hardware units available for the U.S. launch of PlayStation 2. The problem is that there are already more than one million pre-orders for the system.

In classic David vs. Goliath style, Nintendo has revised its release schedule to pit The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask against the Sony PS2 juggernaut. The strategic thought process from the Nintendo camp is along the lines of: since Sony is only shipping one million units for the launch, there will be untold numbers of people, perhaps millions, walking away from stores disappointed, so let's give them the new Zelda.

Will they completely enjoy Zelda or play the game with visions of PS2 dancing in their heads? You tell us.

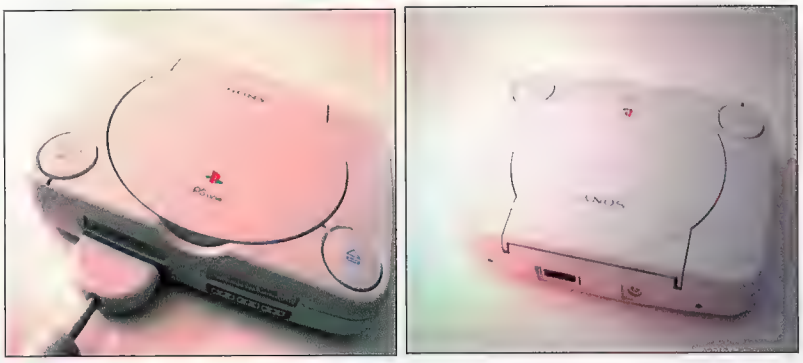
IT'S NOT THE SIZE OF YOUR CONSOLE...

On July 7, Sony released the redesigned PlayStation, the PS One, to incredibly strong sales, shifting over 200,000 units in its first three weeks of release. Since that time, over 600,000 units have been sold, far eclipsing Dreamcast and N64 hardware sales for the same period, proving that the Japanese have not lost their love for small electronics.

When redesigning the system, Sony felt the need to go in and tinker with the user interface, as you can see here. Also, notice the stunning size difference between old and new.

And actually seeing the unit firsthand, it's easy to see why the PS Ones were so eagerly snatched up. For one, it's *small*, making the original PlayStation look like a big, clunky tank. Now, it's not quite as small as a modern Discman, as many were originally claiming, but the svelte, light grey machine certainly qualifies as the smallest CD-based system ever. And it's so beautifully styled, with a wonderfully soft arc defining its top shell and a sleek light grey color, standing in sharp contrast to the stark colors and forms of the PS2. The PS One also features changes to the system's Memory Card and CD Player interface, making both more modern, while incorporating some switchable pseudo surround effects like Dome, Hall, and Church, none of which sounded very good.

We may see the PS One in America this year, but certainly with a launch window sure to give the PS2 plenty of breathing room. And next year will see the release of a small TFT LCD screen that will screw into the back of the unit, creating the world's first self-contained, CD-based game system, albeit one that will require an external power source of some kind.



Notice the smooth upper surface of the PS One. Nothing protrudes or ruins the lines. At the back, there is only a multi-AV out and receptacle for the outboard AC adapter.

HIP TO BE SQUARE

Ever since Nintendo announced the Dolphin last year, the company has firmly stated that the system's name was only tentative—a relief seeing as how that's a smart fish and all. Much like Project Reality was renamed Ultra 64 and then finally Nintendo 64, the Dolphin was destined for a new moniker. We threw a few names around the office—Nintendo Rare-a-moto 2000, The It's-a-me!. But now it looks like the machine will be dubbed Star Cube. Nintendo registered the name at the Japanese patent office back in December 1999, along with the names Star Disk and Millennium Disk. Whether the system will be square is unknown, but if the name is any indication, there's a good chance that Apple and Nintendo have been thinking along the same lines. If you've seen the new Power Mac G4 Cube, it is perfectly square. We'll find out soon enough.

HOFFMAN ORBITS LUNAR

GAMERS' REPUBLIC was recently invited to be part of the "Making of Lunar 2" CD that will be packed in with the game when Working Designs releases it later this year for PlayStation. As the resident Lunar expert, staff editor Chris Hoffman had the honor of stopping by WD's recording studios and being filmed for the documentary, speaking on why the Lunar games have such strong appeal to gamers in the U.S. Plus, he got to hang with the lovely and talented voice actresses behind Lunar 2 (seen below, from left to right are Kathy Ostrander (Lemina), Kelly Weaver (Lucia), GR Editor Chris Hoffman and Jenny Stigile (Jean, Ruby)).

"It was a great experience," said Chris. "The Lunar games have a fantastic legacy and it's incredible to be part of that. I really enjoyed getting to see what goes on behind the scenes firsthand. Of course, meeting the voice actresses was great. WD's really assembled one of the most exceptional collections of voice talent ever heard in a game." Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete is currently scheduled for a November release.

COPY A GD-GO TO JAIL!

Sega's mad and they're not taking it any more! Not so long ago, counterfeiters cracked the copyright encryption codes for Dreamcast GD ROMS—meaning that gamers of the not-so-legal persuasion who have access to a CD burner could pirate games and hurt Sega's business. Previously, Dreamcast games had been much less susceptible to copying than games on CDs. But now that the Dreamcast is a target, Sega is cracking down on the counterfeiters and has already shut down more than 60 web sites and 125 online auctions that were selling the illegal games. Sega said in a statement that they will continue working with well-known auction sites such as Amazon, Lycos, Yahoo!, Excite and eBay to prevent the sale of pirated games. "This is just the first step in an even bigger action the company will undertake to stop this problem," said Sega president Peter Moore. "Pirates are parasites that hurt this community and will not be tolerated by Sega." Most likely, this means Sega will begin bombing pirates' houses with flaming hedgehog pelts starting this fall. At any rate, Sega states that the gaming industry lost more than $3.2 billion to software pirates in 1998—which is no joking matter. They advise that customers buy Dreamcast products only from known retailers and check to make sure the game disc bottom is silver (not black or gold) and has three clearly visible tracks. Our two cents? Let us come along on one of the raids!

HERE COMES THE GOV.!

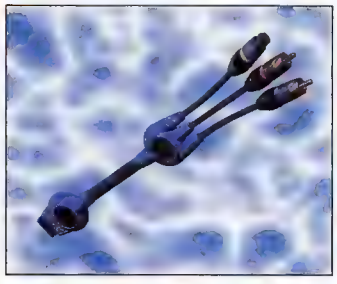
Because it's been proven that video games teach us how to kill, slaughter, maim, disregard human life and properly handle grenades, it is our government's duty to shield us. In Indianapolis, Ind., the city's mayor has taken steps to place restrictions on arcade goers looking for a good time with any game that exhibits explicit sex or violence. Beginning September 1, any player under 18 will be denied access to the offensive units, unless accompanied by a parent of guardian. Labels warning of a game's reprehensible content must be clearly affixed to the restricted unit, and it must stand at least 10 feet away from the more acceptable games and be separated by a wall or curtain. If an arcade owner refuses to comply with these rules, three violations within a year can lead to the loss of his operating license or removal of the unit. So go down the street and buy a gun or rent porn instead.

-Man, I need this job...

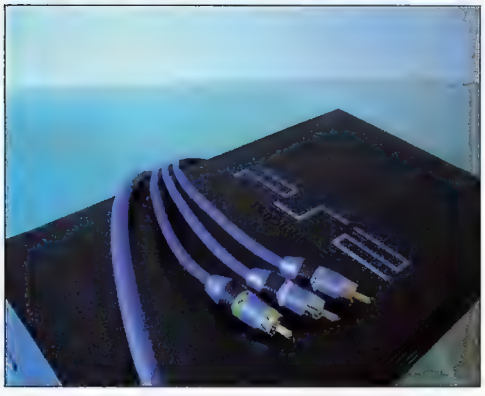
DO YOU GET CABLE?

Monster Cable, perhaps the most well known domestic maker of aftermarket interconnects for audio and video gear, has announced its intention to support Sony's PS2 with a complete line of high-quality cables under the Monster Game banner. Considering the positioning of the PS2 as a serious bit of AV gear, the time seems right for quality interconnects to extract the maximum image and sound from the latest generation of games.

Monster Game's lineup will include composite, S-Video, and component video cables, all terminated in 24K gold connectors with Monster's unique turbine-cut grippers. Also to be offered is an optical cable for use in ferrying the digital audio output of the PS2 into a multi-channel receiver for decoding Dolby Digital and DTS sound.



Finally, Monster will be offering a high-grade power strip called the PowerStation 600, and it will feature color coded outlets and surge protection. All Monster Game products are due to ship in time for the PS2 launch, and GR will bring you a hands-on report of the interconnects next month.

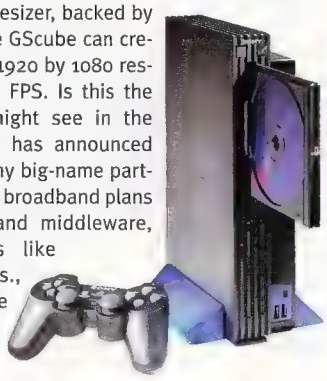


SEWING THE SEEDS

When Sony announced the details of the PlayStation 2's U.S. launch, the company constantly repeated that a broadband network would be a major part of the system's future, but didn't announce any details. At the SIGGRAPH 2000 computer graphics conference held this past July, Sony demonstrated where they may be going with their broadband plans. At SIGGRAPH, Sony unveiled a new system to create computer-generated "digital cinema" based on the PlayStation 2 hardware called GScube. Sony says the system is 10 times more powerful than the PS2 (with the potential to become 100 times more powerful), and they hope that the system will allow film and TV creators to build CG content for broadband distribution.

"We are unveiling a development system that will enable conventional and traditional content creators to realize new methods to communicate storylines and experiences through the digital network environment," said Sony CEO Ken Kutaragi.

The GScube is built from 16 graphic units, each made from a combination of the PS2's Emotion Engine CPU and Sony's Graphics Synthesizer, backed by 32MB of memory. The GScube can create CG images with a 1920 by 1080 resolution running at 60 FPS. Is this the kind of power we might see in the PlayStation 3? Sony has announced they already have many big-name partners helping with their broadband plans for content, sound and middleware, including companies like Square, Warner Bros., SGI, Criterion Software and Yamaha.



JAMMIN' AGAIN!

It's always fun going to visit Sega. More often than not we get to see and sometimes play games we wouldn't otherwise. Games like... uh, I don't know, Toejam & Earl for the Dremacast. That's right, while visiting the new Visual Concepts offices we were pleasantly surprised to discover that the team working on Toejam & Earl is occupying space within the same walls. Which obviously means a whole lot of good stuff is brewing atop the hill that the building stands on.

While the game is 12-plus months away, development is moving quickly. From what we saw and were told, the new game will emphasize the old-school attraction from the first game in terms of exploration, while taking advantage of an even funkier look and feel. The characters look amazing and the landscapes have a visual flare not yet seen on the Dreamcast. We hope to have some development shots soon.

EIDOS' BOOBY CALL...

During the E3 show, Eidos and Core had a few games behind the scenes that we were unable to talk about. Well...the curtain has begun to rise. We took a trip to the Eidos offices to get a firsthand look at what Jeremy, Adrian and the crew at Core have up there very large sleeves.

Tomb Raider: The Next Generation, both for the PS2 and PC, will foster an entirely new set of adventures that move far from Lara's original tomb raiding. Set inside a large, underlying story, the new game will be released in what could be called chapters or episodes, making three, four, even five TR titles available within a year. Like a television or comic book series, the game will be segmented into more detailed sequences with a possible season finale to tide people over until the next year. This new approach blows the doors open on sub-plots, new characters, and certain characters getting their own side stories, ala *X-Files*.

The next game we previewed was Eden 2, a strategic, team-oriented, intelligent action game unlike any we've ever seen. You control four characters, each having his own special ability to get out of any particular crisis. Specific commands are routed to your team leader and general commands can be assigned by you to your team members in order to accomplish the mission objectives. The game allows you to play in first- or third-person, swapping back and forth whenever you see fit, and environments stretch wide and high, inside and outside of some beautifully designed skyscrapers.

And, finally, Adrian from Core Design booted up Herdy Gerdy for the PS2. Forget anything you've seen using the newly adopted cell-shading technique (making polygonal objects look like 3D cell animation), because Herdy Gerdy can only be compared to a classic Disney film in look, depth and appeal. The basic premise has your character herding different animals through the extremely clever use of surrounding materials. This game is absolutely revolutionary and the original concept came from a 16-year-old.

It's great seeing Core innovate again. Not that we don't appreciate Lara: she'll always be our first love. We just don't know if we'll ever be able to look at sheep the same way again.

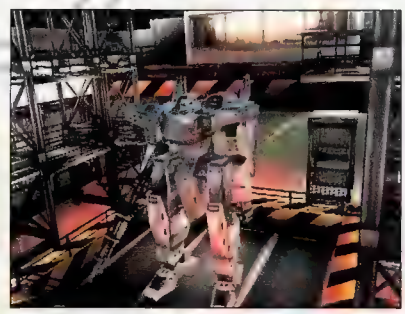
HAWAII UBI-O

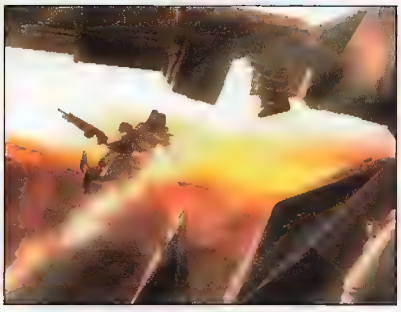
The job of a video-game editor can be grueling. Take, for example, the recent Ubi Soft Gamer's Weekend, held on the lovely but commercial island of Honolulu, Hawaii. Up at 8:00 a.m. every morning, we had to endure excruciatingly painful nipple chaffing from the surfing and near-death experiences from broken straps while parasailing. And that's nothing compared to the dinner cruise with the 6'5" Elvis impersonator and transvestite lounge act singing the Titanic theme song. But hey, anything for the love of games.

And what games Ubi Soft has! The showcase of the event was the highly anticipated Grandia II, which was introduced by Game Arts producer Mr. Takeshi Miyaji and the game's director of development, Mr. Katsunori Saito. Unfortunately, we were only able to scratch the surface of what Game Arts claims will be at the very least a 40-hour adventure, created by a team of nearly 200 dedicated game makers. Not bad for a company that started with a team of seven and had offices so cramped that the bathroom served as a cubicle.

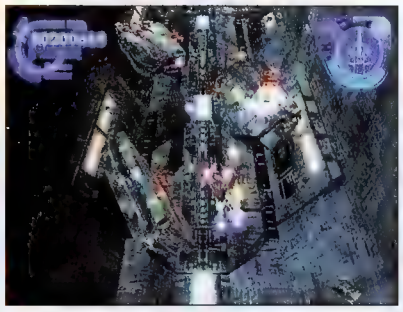
Given that the original Grandia lost substantial magic in its transformation from Saturn to PlayStation—the translation was wobbly, the voice acting flat—Ubi Soft is more than aware of how important it is to maintain the integrity of this massive 2.5-year project. Says John Chowanec, product manager, "...four translators completed the conversion from Japanese to English and we currently have six writers reviewing and editing the text at Ubi Soft, San Francisco. We have already arranged the voiceover audio direction, courtesy of voice director Kris Zimmerman, who worked on Metal Gear Solid. We're very confident that this title is in the best hands it could be."

WORKING DESIGNS' LATEST TREASURE IS JUST THAT!





Gun Griffon Blaze

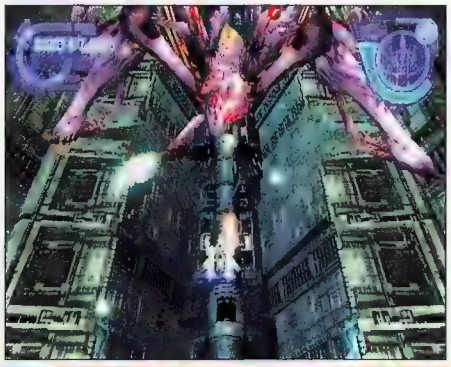


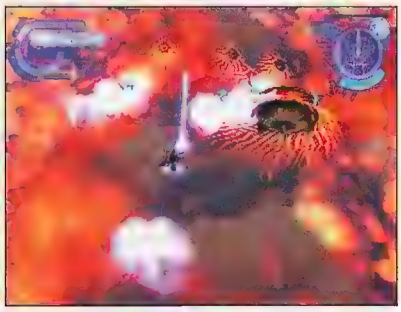
Silpheed:The Lost Planet

In a move we can only describe as harmonious, Working Designs has acquired the rights to both Gun Griffon Blaze—Game Arts' sequel to their stunning mission-based mech action shooter on Saturn—and Silpheed, their legendary 3D shooter franchise that began back in '88 and continued in '93 with one of the most memorable Sega CD experiences in the system's precarious life cycle. At the time, Silpheed was an altogether epochal title incorporating large, detailed, FMV, polygonal backgrounds with added collision giving the game the look and feel of something designed for much more powerful hardware. We've come a long, long way in a short time, however, and there is nary a shooter fan alive who hasn't dreamed of a true 3D Silpheed running on one of today's beefy new home consoles.

Well, as fate would have it, our wish has been granted as Game Arts has completed the game and entrusted it to Working Designs, who must now work quickly to get it ready for the PS2 launch. But the really great news is who programmed this sequel—none other than *Treasure*! That's right! Besides the engine and CG (which is breathtaking), Treasure was in complete command of the development of Silpheed: The Lost Planet and it's truly something special.

We can remember a time when we took shooters for granted, but those days have passed, as great shooters have become extremely rare. This is certainly one of the brightest lights in the PS2 launch, which is quickly taking shape. Not that Gun Griffon Blaze isn't another jewel. Take our word for it. This game redefines mech action shooters. We'll have tons more on both games in the next issue.





MAKING FOX KIDS BETTER DRIVERS

As if Fox Kids wasn't already the coolest thing on television, with the addition of Action Man, Escaflowne, and Cyber 6 joining the likes of Digimon and Beast Machines, they are soon to bestow their prowess upon online, incorporating characters from their new, CG-rendered NASCAR toon, NASCAR Racers, into an online video game. The game will use an innovative, new 3D technology being developed by Intel and Macromedia. Intel's Internet 3D Graphics technology, which will become part of Macromedia's Shockwave Player, is a new high performance, 3D technology that delivers a more realistic and immersive interactive experience for online gamers. The game promises eye-popping graphics and fast gameplay that will rival the best online games available today and will launch on FoxKids.com later this year.

WHAT IS THIS?

Can you guess what this piece of plastic is? If you can, send us the answer, and the first person to guess correctly will win the thing, plus a free year's subscription to your favorite magazine. No, not *O*, but the one you're holding now.

Send your best guess to:
Gamers' Republic Plastic Thing Contest
32123 Lindero Canyon Rd. Suite 218
Westlake Village, CA 91361

THE FIRST ONLINE STRATEGY GAME AVAILABLE FOR SEGA DREAMCAST!™

GOLD EDITION

RAILROAD TYCOON II

Explore uncharted territory and stake your claim!

Bulldoze the competition and increase your holdings!

Construct an intricate network one station at a time!

FORGE AN EMPIRE ON IRON HORSE POWER

Sega Dreamcast

EVERYONE E ESRB

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database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS

top ten selling playstation titles

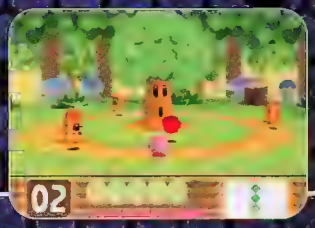
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JULY 2-15 2000

1. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	6. DRIVER	GT INTERACTIVE
2. LEGEND OF DRAGOON	SONY	7. SYPHON FILTER 2	989 STUDIOS
3. SPEC OPS	TAKE 2	8. SYPHON FILTER	989 STUDIOS
4. WWF SMACKDOWN!	THQ	9. TRIPLE PLAY 2001	EA
5. TEKKEN 3	NAMCO	10. GRAN TURISMO 2	SONY

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JULY 2-15 2000

1. KIRBY 64	NINTENDO	6. SW EPISODE 1: RACER	LUCAS ARTS
2. PERFECT DARK	NINTENDO	7. SUPER SMASH BROS.	NINTENDO
3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	8. MARIO PARTY 2	NINTENDO
4. POKÉMON STADIUM	NINTENDO	9. SUPER MARIO 64	NINTENDO
5. EXCITEBIKE 64	NINTENDO	10. GOLDENEYE 007	NINTENDO



top ten selling dreamcast titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JULY 2-15 2000

1. MARVEL vs. CAPCOM 2	CAPCOM	6. RES EVIL: Code Veronica	CAPCOM
2. VIRTUA TENNIS	SEGA	7. STREET FIGHTER 3 D.I.	CAPCOM
3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	8. SILVER	INFOGRAMES
4. GAUNTLET LEGENDS	MIDWAY	9. CRAZY TAXI	SEGA
5. RAINBOW SIX	MAJESCO	10. SONIC ADVENTURE	SEGA

top ten selling pc titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JULY 2-15 2000

1. DIABLO 2	BLIZZARD	6. SIMCITY 3000 UNLIMITED	MAXIS
2. WHO WANTS..MILLION 2	DISNEY	7. RLR CSTR TYCOON: Cork	HASBRO
3. THE SIMS	MAXIS	8. SHOGUN TOTAL WAR	EA
4. RLR COASTER TYCOON	HASBRO	9. SLOTS	MASQUE PUBLISHING
5. VAMPIRE: Masquer. R.	ACTIVISION	10. SIM MANIA PAC	MAXIS

top ten selling overall console titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF JULY 2-15 2000

1. KIRBY 64-N64	NINTENDO	6. PERFECT DARK-N64	NINTENDO
2. POKÉMON YELLOW-GB	NINTENDO	7. PMN TRADING CARD-GB	NINTENDO
3. T HAWK PRO SKATER-PS	ACTIVISION	8. WWF SMACKDOWN!-PS	THQ
4. LEGEND OF DRAGOON-PS	SONY	9. POKÉMON BLUE-GB	NINTENDO
5. SPEC OPS-PS	TAKE 2	10. TEKKEN 3-PS	NAMCO

world republic top ten games

top ten Japanese titles

1. MARIO TENNIS 64	N64	6. MEDALOT 3: Kabuto version	GB
2. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS	7. PACHISLOT A. KINGDOM	PS
3. DUEL MONSTERS III	GB	8. MEDALOT 3: Stag Beetle	GB
4. P. PRO BASEBALL 2000	PS	9. P. PRO BASEBALL 7	PS2
5. TOMARUNNER	PS	10. FROM TV ANIMATION...	WS

* FROM JULY 21 ~ JULY 28

top ten U.K. titles

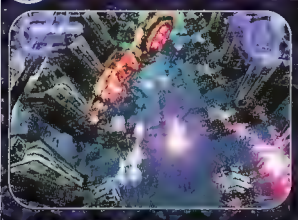
1. POKÉMON YELLOW	GB	6. EURO 2000	PS
2. COLIN McRAE RALLY 2.0	PS	7. POKÉMON STADIUM	N64
3. WWF SMACKDOWN!	PS	8. ECCO THE DOLPHIN	DC
4. POKÉMON RED	GB	9. RES. EVIL Code: Veronica	DC
5. POKÉMON BLUE	GB	10. JEDI POWER BATTLES	PS

* WEEK ENDING JUNE 16 2000

gamers' republic top ten games

* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH AUGUST 3 2000

d. halverson

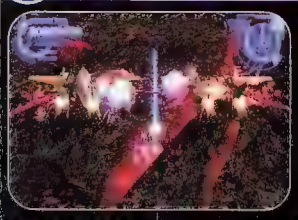


1. SILPHEED	PS2	
2. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2	
3. GUN GRIFFON BLAZE	PS2	
4. ECCO	DC	
5. CANNON SPIKE	DC	
6. ORPHEN	PS2	
7. GRANDIA 2	DC	
8. X SQUAD	PS2	
9. MARIO TENNIS	N64	
10. FUR FIGHTERS	DC	

b. siechter

1. SILPHEED	PS2	
2. FUR FIGHTERS	DC	
3. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2	
4. X SQUAD	PS2	
5. TIME SPLITTERS	PS2	
6. ASTAL	SATURN	
7. VIRTUA TENNIS	DC	
8. CRASH BASH	PS	
9. RIDGE RACER V	PS2	
10. BIKKURI MOUSE	PS2	

mike hobbs

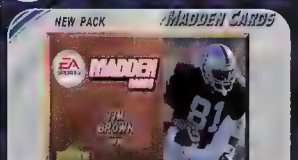


1. SILPHEED	PS2	
2. MARIO TENNIS	N64	
3. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2	
4. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS	
5. FERRARI F355	DC	
6. GUN GRIFFON BLAZE	PS2	
7. X SQUAD	PS2	
8. SEGA GT	DC	
9. VALKYRIE PROFILE	PS	
10. BIKKURI MOUSE	PS2	

s. alonso

1. UFC	DC	
2. SF III: DOUBLE IMPACT	DC	
3. SILPHEED	PS2	
4. VIRTUA TENNIS	DC	
5. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2	
6. SPIDER-MAN	PS	
7. HALF LIFE	PC	
8. GUNDAM SIDE STORY	DC	
9. RIDGE RACER V	PS2	
10. T. HAWK PRO SKTR 2	PS	

poodh

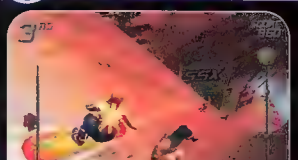


1. MADDEN 2001	PS	
2. MARIO TENNIS	N64	
3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	DC	
4. FUR FIGHTERS	DC	
5. VIRTUA TENNIS	DC	
6. NFL GAMEDAY 2001	PS	
7. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2	
8. NCAA GAMEBREAKER	PS	
9. PERFECT DARK	N64	
10. WARIO LAND 3	GBC	

nelson lui

1. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2	
2. SILPHEED	PS2	
3. HALF LIFE: CS	PC	
4. FINAL FANTASY IX	PSX	
5. NBA 2K1	DC	
6. MARIO TENNIS	N64	
7. VIRTUA TENNIS	DC	
8. RIVER CITY RANSOM	NES	
9. DIABLO 2	PC	
10. SEGA GT	DC	

bob almquist



1. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2	
2. FUR FIGHTERS	DC	
3. UFC	DC	
4. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS	
5. LEGEND OF DRAGOON	PS	
6. WARLORDS	PC	
7. DELTA FORCE	PC	
8. TIME SPLITTERS	PS2	
9. X SQUAD	PS2	
10. SPIDER-MAN	PS	

c hossman

1. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS	
2. CHRONO CROSS	PS	
3. SPIDER-MAN	PS	
4. SILPHEED	PS2	
5. MARVEL vs CAPCOM 2	DC	
6. LUNAR 2: Eternal Blue	PS	
7. FINAL FANTASY V	PS	
8. STRIDER 1&2	PS	
9. SUPER METROID	SNES	
10. UFC	DC	

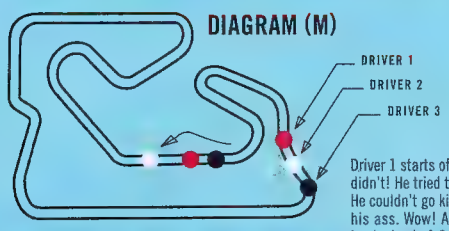
1

Famous pro speed racer Benny Moto says, in life and in racing we must know how to SLOW DOWN. Benny uses carbon fiber rotors and 4 piston calipers because he says the curb tastes like defeat.

2

Are you hard core? Have this beefy spring please. It's good for you. Without a trick suspension the hairball track will shake your head up and down like one of those stupid dogs in the back window.

DIAGRAM (M)



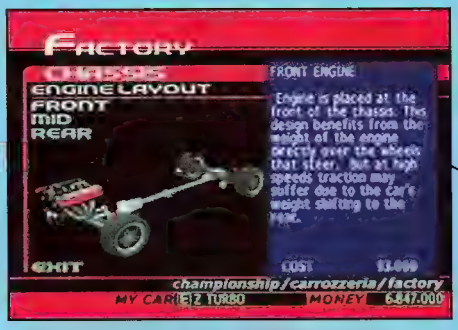
Driver 1 starts off in the lead. But did he listen to Benny? He didn't! He tried to save money on brakes. He's cheap. He's stupid. He couldn't go kicky fast through the turn. Now Driver 2 passed his ass. Wow! And look at Driver 3! He's making power. How to be the leader? Customize and drive like a freak with fiery pants.

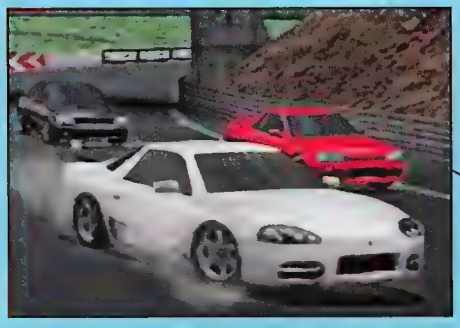
3

A big, 19 inch, 3 piece magnesium wheel is your fun friend in the quest for a sweeter contact patch. It's hot too.

YOU FOLLOW MY ADVICE. YOU CUSTOMIZE. YOU BEAT EVERYBODY. **POW!**

Tear it up in this total competition speed trip where you can build original machines from scratch or tweak over 130 GT sports cars that reproduce exact handling and performance specs. Then use your VMU to trade machines, parts and laptimes on the net. Assuming you got anything worth trading, Grandma.





6 The shock absorber is often overlooked. Not here. In Benny's shop everyone concentrates on the shock. A good shock where it really counts will bring forth nimbler handling and quicker transitions.

5 Oh my God! Look at that engine! Yes, that's a kicky big damn motor. Benny likes the superhuge V12 for stump-pulling power. But only for the big bad bomber cars. Otherwise enjoy a V-8.

4 Oh! What a loud muffler! Loud coolie mufflers intimidate chump-ass rivals. Get a big pipe for greater flow at high rpm levels.

Dreamcast.

IT'S THINKING

sega.com

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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Some of the greatest video-game characters ever quit their day jobs
as Capcom continues to champion the at-home arcade experience

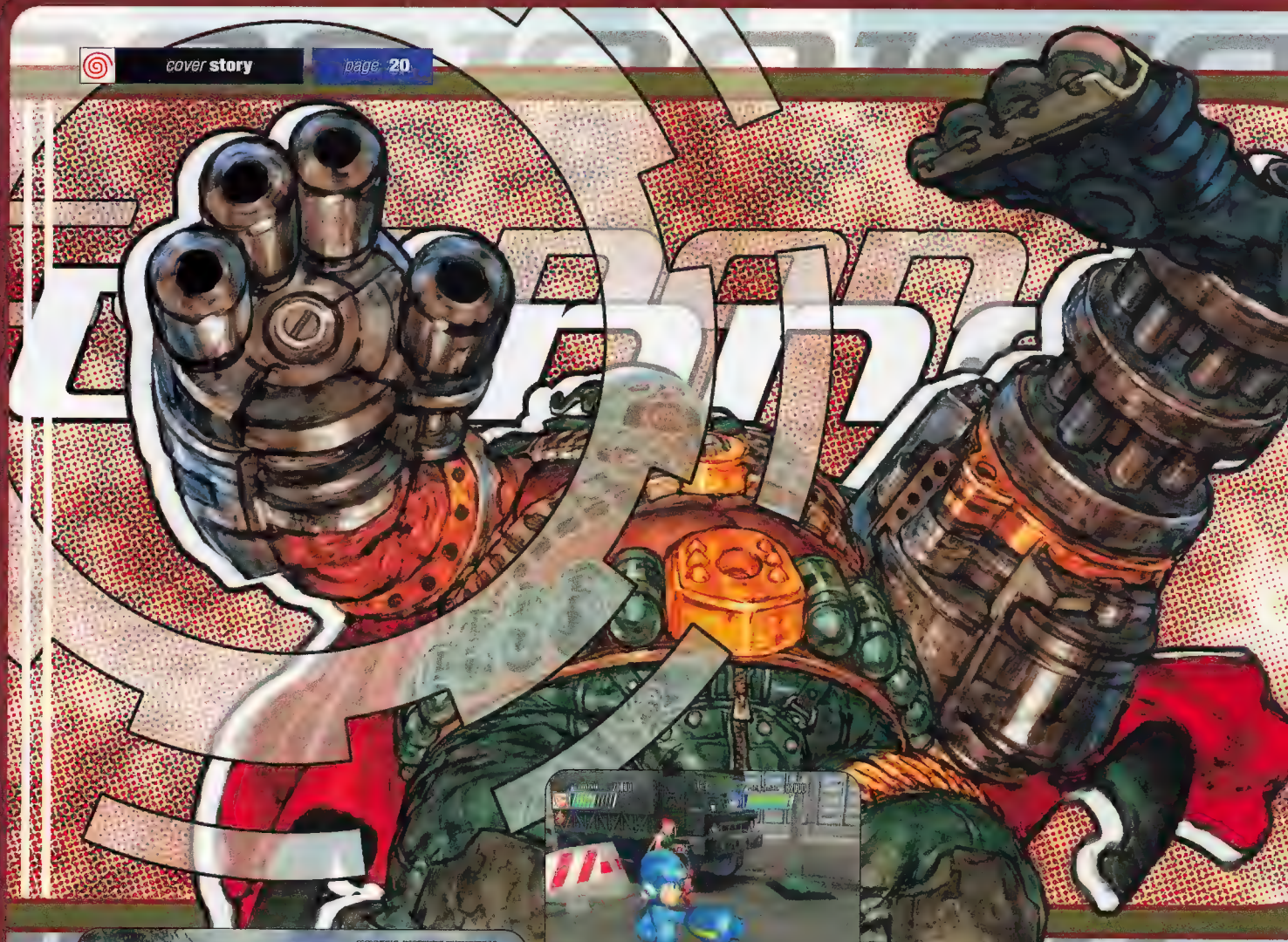
CANNON SPIKE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Capcom's greatest strength lies in their characters. The strongest franchise company in the industry, their roster reads like a who's who of gaming past and present: Mega Man, Street Fighter, Resident Evil, Darkstalkers, Ghouls 'n Ghosts, Mercs, Power Stone, Strider, Final Fight and Bionic Commando all stand as unforgettable gaming experiences. Only one—Bionic Commando—has missed the last three waves of consoles; otherwise, from 16-bit on, all of these have remained a part of many a hardcore gamer's action regimen. Aside from the obvious—each respective universe contains some of the greatest character designs ever devised—each game's artistic accompaniment is a treasure among itself. As Disney is to cinema, Capcom is to gaming. When one thinks of video-game art, Capcom is usually the first name that comes to mind.

One of the main reasons to celebrate the arrival of Cannon Spike is that, for the first time, Capcom has seen fit to pull several characters from their regular gigs—including Cammy, which sold me in about one second—and let them spread their wings in an entirely new genre. Cannon Spike features a generous collection of some of Capcom's most elite warriors. Cammy and Charlie from Street Fighter, Arthur from Ghosts 'n Goblins, B.B. Hood from Darkstalkers, Mega Man, and two new characters, Simone and Shiva, populate this utterly gorgeous arcade shooter. And as you would expect, each brings with them trademark maneuvers, strengths, and weaknesses, adding up to an infinitely replayable feast for one or two players.

It wasn't all that long ago that these games ruled the universe and, unless you had ample space and/or cash for a full-sized coin-op or Super Gun Jamma components, the thought of having one at home was pretty much wishful thinking. When 16-bit came along we saw low-budget versions of our favorite coin-ops, but few held a candle to the coin-op originals. And by the time the Saturn and PlayStation came along, coin-ops were pushing far more polys than either system could muster. With the exception of the expensive (and all but extinct) Neo Geo, which had a limited but impressive library, perfect arcade ports have just now become



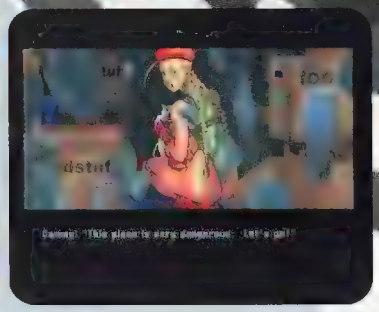
a reality. If you think about it, Cannon Spike, a 20-minute long game that you'll play over and over with each of the seven characters to unlock all of its treasures, at $29.99, is indicative of the amazing new generation of gaming that we are currently enjoying. Anyone who stood for hours pouring quarters into Final Fight, Golden Axe, Smash TV, etc., will realize the value a game like this demonstrates, and be glad they stayed young at heart long enough to enjoy it. We're actually turning a corner where home console games are beginning to surpass arcade games.

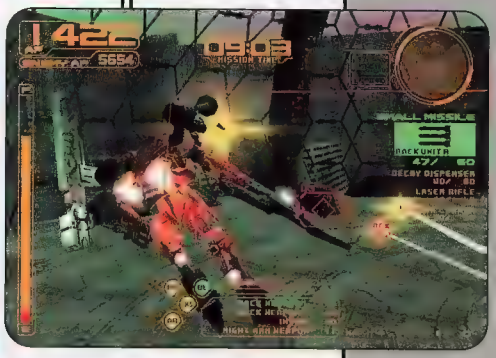
Judging by the screenshots, the gameplay may appear reminiscent of Mercs or Commando; however, while it shares the same perspective, Cannon Spike is quite different. The action takes place in environments similar to but larger than Power Stone's and, as you clear each, a new portion opens until finally a boss drops in to finish the area off. The action is fast, fluid, and unrelenting, with each themed area populated by numerous enemies that exhibit an array of attack patterns and techniques. Co-produced by Japanese shooter gods Psyiko, Cannon Spike is blessed with some of the best shooter control you will ever experience. Of the four buttons, two shoot and two render

fighting-style moves; the L trigger launches your super; and the R trigger unleashes a lock-on mechanism that allows the player to home in on selected enemies for a limited time. Of course, the most important aspect of any top-down shooter is strafing, and here it's almost second nature: once you're facing the direction you desire, simply hold A and you're locked in place.

Nearly as important and just as good are the game's visuals, which epitomize why these characters and Capcom are so revered in the first place. Cannon Spike is busting at the seams with fine detail, extraordinary mecha and boss designs, flawless textures, and gorgeous hi-res backgrounds. Not only are the models superb but they animate fluidly amidst packed environments and fluid action. Finally, the soundtrack is outstanding with melodies and instrumentals akin to many a glorious Capcom universe.

Admittedly, Cannon Spike isn't overly deep. In fact, it's pretty much a reflex action extravaganza, an audio-video treat for the twitch reflex in all of us. Arcade games have and will continue to play a vital role on the video-game world stage—at least as long as Capcom has anything to say about it. GR





ARMORED CORE 2

BY MIKE HOBBS

From Software's third PS2 game takes its classic Armored Core series to a new realm with over 100 million possible mech designs

Hard-core mech fanatics are going to be in heaven with Armored Core 2. Aside from its gorgeous PS2 visuals and time-tested gameplay, a number of unique features will leave players completely breathless and devoid of a social life.

We're not sure who at From Software did the math on this, but apparently, Armored Core 2 will allow users to create 100 million different mechs. Now, this number includes color variation as a trait, but even factoring out this variable, there will be an impossible number of unique mechs that can be created using AC2's parts mixing and matching feature. And in a nice touch, the game will allow you to use any USB mouse to create original emblems and logos for that final touch of customization.

Armored Core will also be the first game to make use of the PS2's i-link port on the front of the system, allowing for any generic, four-pin FireWire cable to be used for full-screen link-up battles. This we cannot wait to try, and we'll tell you all about it next month.

GR

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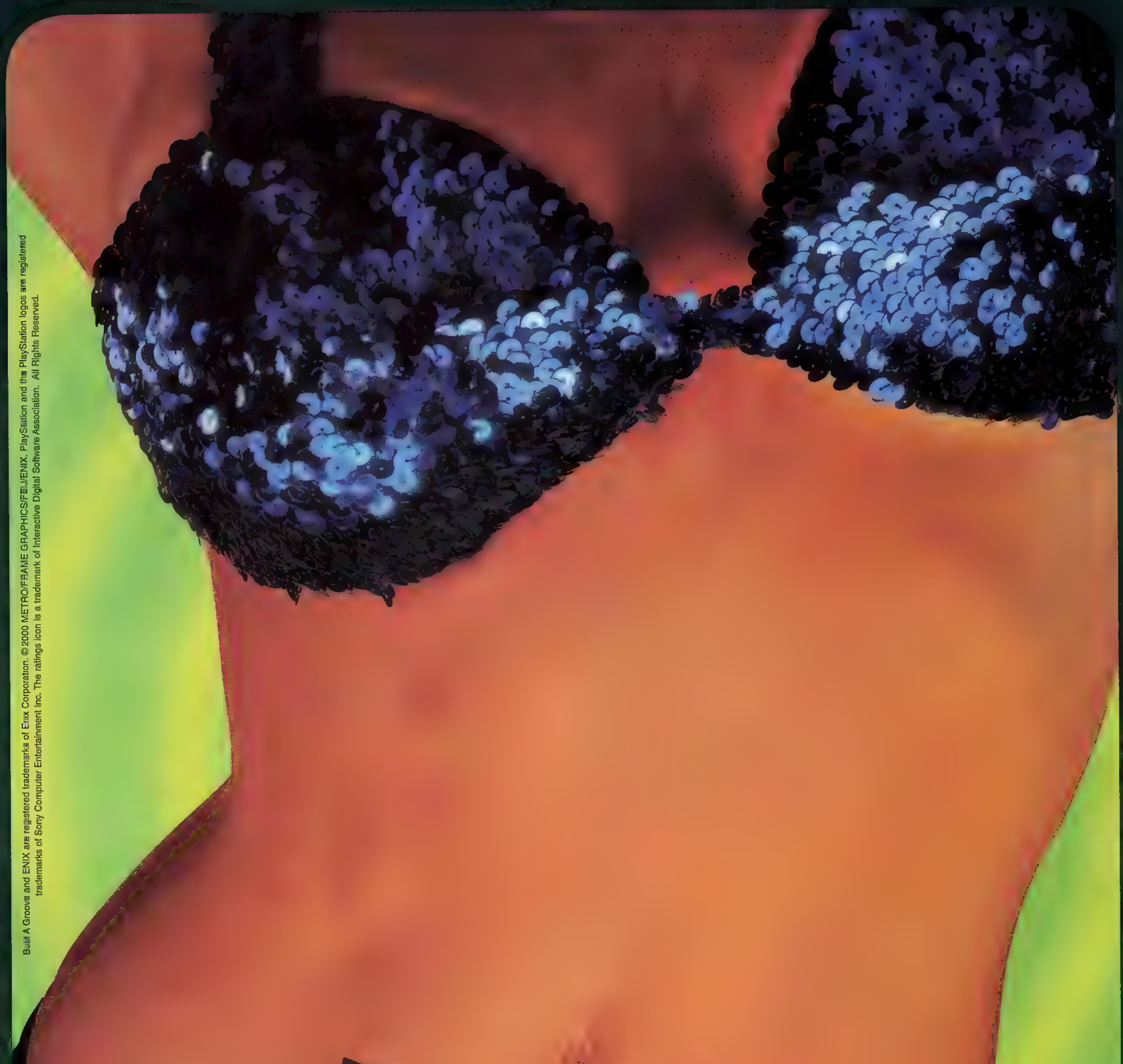

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Comic Mischief

The three towers of the Mikado Building are named after the three divinetreasures of the Imperial throne.

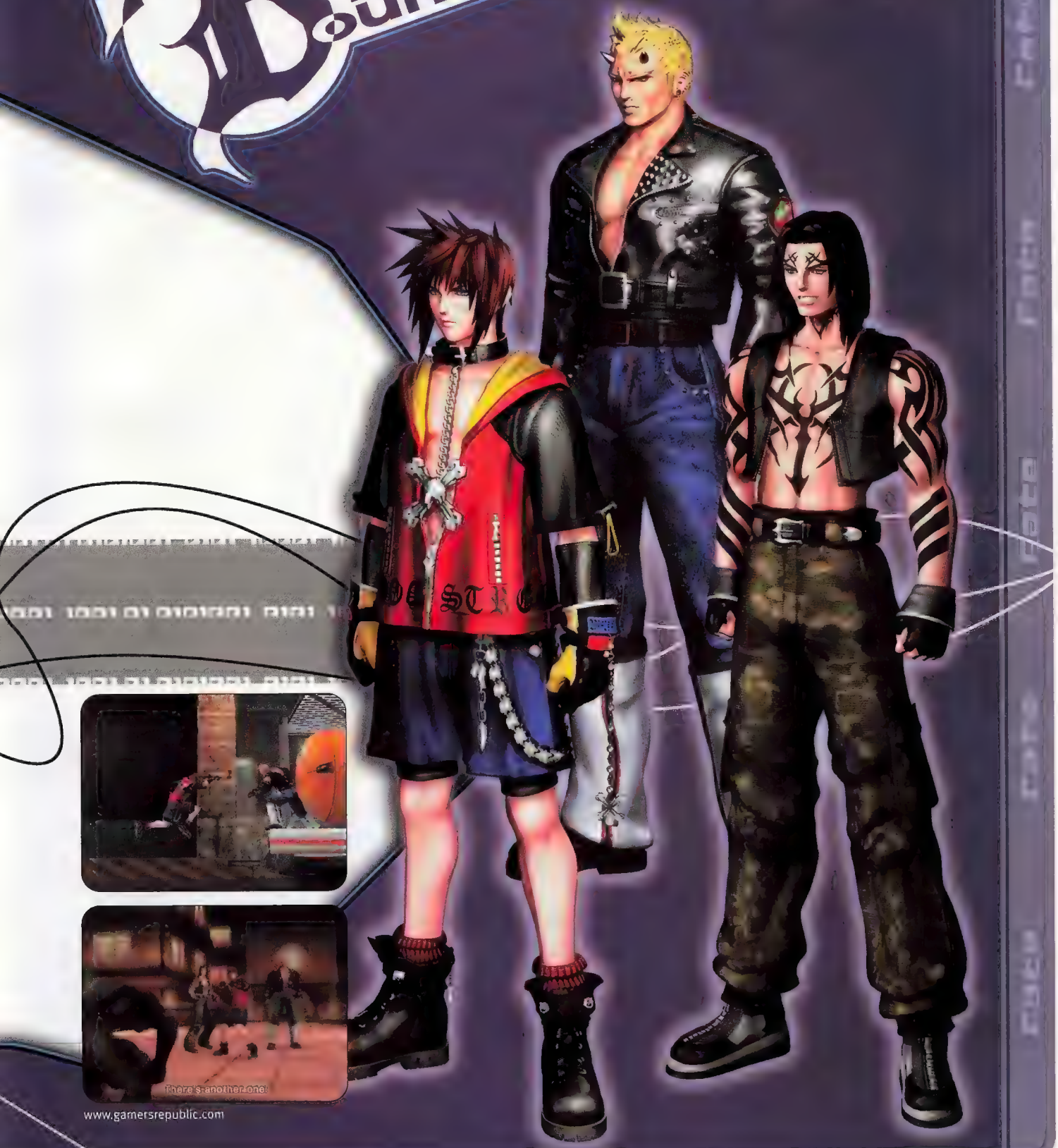
Main Office (Seventy stories above the ground.)
⇒ KAGAMI TOWER(a shopping mall annex) ("KAGAMI"means Mirror in English.)
Space Shuttle Assembly Plant
⇒ TSURUGI TOWER (The rocket launch tower)("TSURUGI"means Sword in English.)
Space Development Project
⇒ MAGATAMA TOWER(The restricted tower, shrouded in mystery)("MAGATAMA"means Jade in English.)

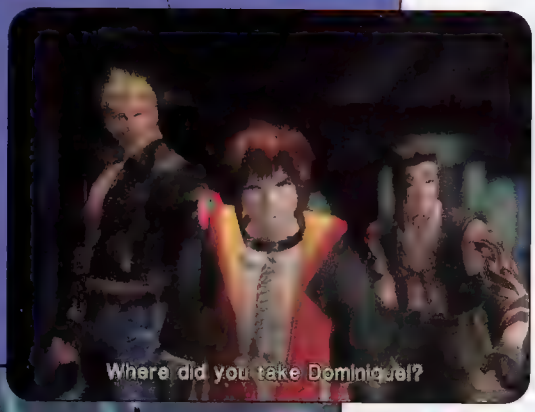
Furious action, dynamic visuals and extensive RPG elements combine to form what Square considers a new genre. But is it truly revolutionary?

The Bouncer™

Soon, a man haunted by a tragic past
Within him lies strength and kindness, but also great sorrow
All this will change when he meets a girl named Dominique
These are the residents of DOG STREET

BY BRADY FIECHTER





There are the obvious reasons to get excited about The Bouncer: it's being made on PlayStation 2 by Square, a company which knows how to make gorgeous games, scribe stories with an enviably skilled pen, and frame the action with absorbing layers of cinematic qualities. And then there are the not-so-obvious reasons: the game draws from many of Square's strengths to form somewhat of a new genre, one that Square likes to call role-playing action.

The role-playing begins with Sion Barzahd, a 19-year-old bouncer who works at a popular bar called FATE. Relaxing to music as he awaits his shift, drifting off to sleep, Sion is pleasantly distracted by the lovely Dominique Cross, a young girl who routinely captures the affection of patrons of the bar. As he begins to acknowledge a conversation, a startling crash from broken glass draws his attention to a troop of intruders pouncing from a skylight. Before he can react, a masked figure jumps in and carries the screaming Dominique out a window on the bar's landing.

Let the action begin. In fully interactive, entirely unrestricted settings that start in the room of the bar, the pummeling is delivered by the handful of bouncers who work at FATE. To add extra charge to the already electric proceedings, the action is constantly strung together by dynamic real-time cut scenes.

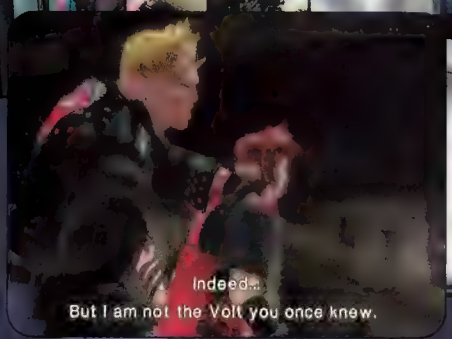
The bodies quickly begin to pile up, but the story is not meant to take a back seat to the chaos. As one of the first games on PS2 to play on DVD, the immense storage space has afforded Square the luxury of using voiceovers for all dialogue--a near first in game design.

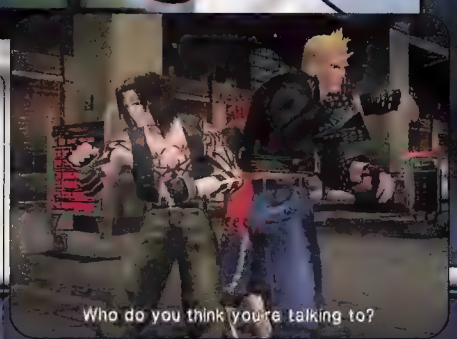
Displayed on video almost a year ago at the fall Tokyo Game Show and still in an early state, The Bouncer is taking the long path to completion, but it seems that Square is bogged down by ambition and not incompetence. So furiously active and complex are the game's movements, it's hard to imagine the possibilities of such a game world; the more we see of it, the more intriguing it becomes. At the very least it'll be a marvel to look at, thanks in no small part to character designs crafted by the artist behind Final Fantasy VII and VIII. With the kind of powerful resources Square has to work with, there's little doubt The Bouncer will pack killer PS2 punch. GR

Top Floor

Shopping Mall

Hanging Garden





MIDNIGHT CLUB STREET RACING

BY MIKE HOBBS

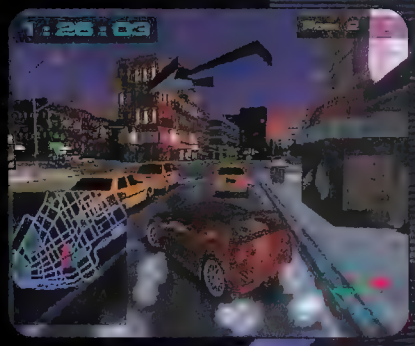
The onslaught of amazing-looking PlayStation 2 games continues with Angel Studio's free-roaming city racer

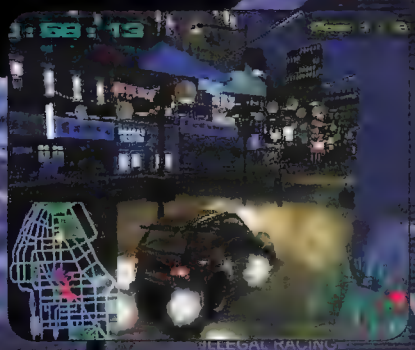
There is a graphical effect in Midnight Club, a simple one to pull off according to the game's producer, that blew us away the first time we saw it. That effect was one of slightly shiny, wet asphalt, and it had an amazing sense of reality to it, serving to reinforce the growing notion that the PS2 will indeed offer up heretofore unseen imagery.

Whether the machine will offer up unseen forms of gameplay is up to developers, but as I've argued in the past, better graphics are a wholly worthwhile pursuit, as they can have a profound influence on the overall experience of a game. Such is the case here with Midnight Club. By that, I'm not meaning to imply that the game is just your typical racer with the promise of great graphics being its only reward, but rather that the graphics are playing a big part in the initial excitement about it.

Midnight Club, though still very early as evidenced by unstable frame rates and some unfinished graphics, looks to take players through many different racing challenges through several city environments like London and New York. One of the great talking points of the game thus far is its sense of freedom when racing. Basically, the entire cities are at your disposal, and you can charge towards the finish line in the racing modes as you see fit, taking any number of circuitous routes to get there. This isn't necessarily a new concept (look at Crazy Taxi or Super Runabout), but as rendered by the PS2, the sense of place is unprecedented.

When complete, Midnight Club is promised to run at a constant 60 frames per second and with no pop-up. This, if achieved, combined with some of the stunning graphical effects we've already seen and fun gameplay, should render this game one of several must-haves for the PS2 launch, which should prove to be one of the best in history. GR





SONS OF LIBERTY
METAL GEAR SOLID 2

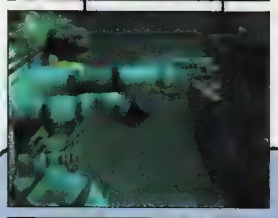
BY MIKE HOBBS

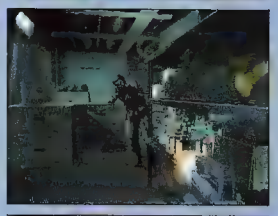
Konami's DVD release of the MGS 2 trailer has done the impossible, raising our expectations to the point of synaptic meltdown

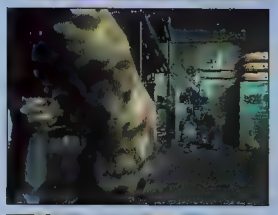
Konami must have a bit of a sadistic streak about them. Why else would they want to torture us by releasing the Metal Gear Solid 2 trailer on DVD in Japan? As if the anticipation for this game couldn't have reached a higher level after seeing the Kojima-directed trailer at this year's E3. Now we have to endure the glorious agony of pouring over every second of the demo, marveling at the staggering promise of this game.

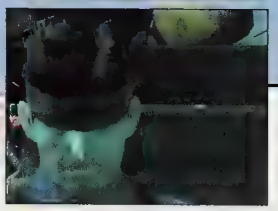
Not to put too fine a point on it, the DVD version of the trailer is simply beyond words. And while we're at it, it's beyond the still pictures that you see here, taken directly from the video. Experiencing this thing in motion is the only way to fully appreciate how groundbreaking this game is going to be, a fact evidenced by the DVD showing up on eBay for $100 or more. Let's just say that you've never seen this level of real-time polygonal expression, and it's a stunning testament to the power of the PS2. I believe 100 percent in the idea that this demo is within the grasp of the system, and it's a staggering thought to imagine that this is what games are going to be like in a year's time.

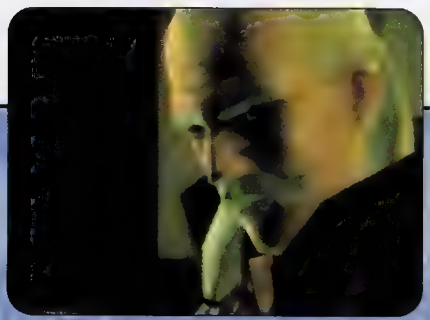
But a question lingering on everyone's mind is whether any of the scenes present in the trailer will end up in the actual game? Probably not exactly as wee see them here, but there is no question that Kojima and his team will be able to deliver something that is truly extraordinary, a quantum leap in the art of game design and direction. GR

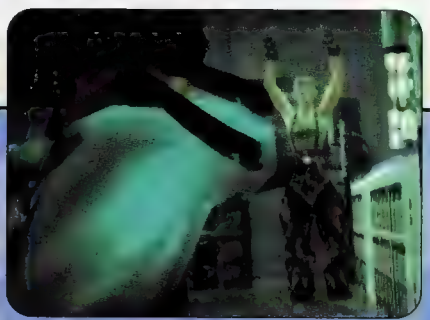












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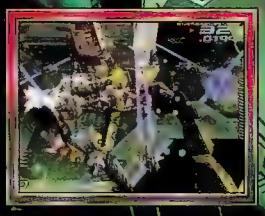

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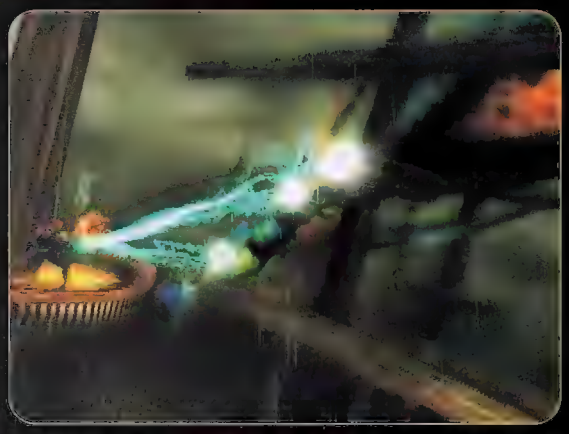


ORPHEN

BY MIKE HOBBS

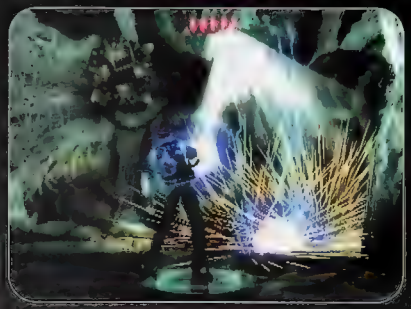
Yoshinobu Akita's cult novel and animation series makes its video-game premiere on PS2

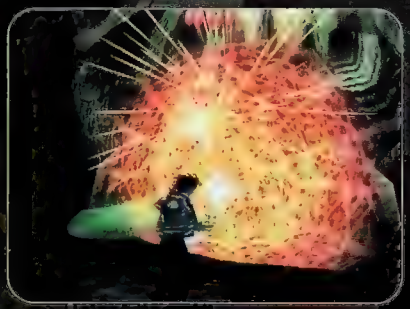
Yoshinobu Akita's popular serialized novel "Orphen" has been entertaining teens in Japan since 1996, having since spawned an animated television series, a manga and, now, a shiny new PS2 game from little-known developers Shade.

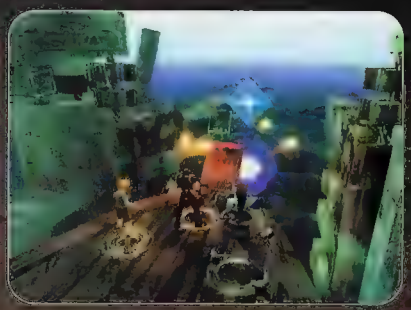
Due to be released this year by Activision, Sorcerous Stabber Orphen is an interesting mix of third-person action/adventure and monster combat, featuring one of the most curious battle systems we've seen in quite some time. When fighting minor enemies, Orphen, or one of the many other playable characters who join you in your quest, simply attacks with a sword or other basic weapon. But when major enemies are encountered, the game switches to a curious, fixed-position battle system where your character is pretty much frozen in place, and you launch projectile attacks, selecting individual enemies with a targeting cursor. It's an odd, gimmicky system, but it's not without some ingenuity and it does allow for some interesting strategies to be employed.

Being a PS2 game, Orphen exhibits the proper next-generation sheen, with nice, high-res environments and tons of special effects like depth-of-field rendering and motion blurring. But the visual presentation is brought down a notch by the fact that the camera, controlled by the user, is allowed to pass through walls, with everything turning transparent that might block your view. This in itself is not bad, but it leads to situations where you're always seeing the backside of polygons and behind bits of the environment that you're not supposed to see, and it lends the game a slight air of sloppiness. Perhaps Activision can take steps to lessen this somewhat.

Whatever the case, Orphen is shaping up to be a solid PS2 title, though the appeal of the character may be lost on Americans, who have yet to officially see any of the animes or read any of the novels. Now would be a perfect time for someone to bring that stuff over, wouldn't you say? GR







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SMUGGLER'S RUN

BY DAVE HALVERSON

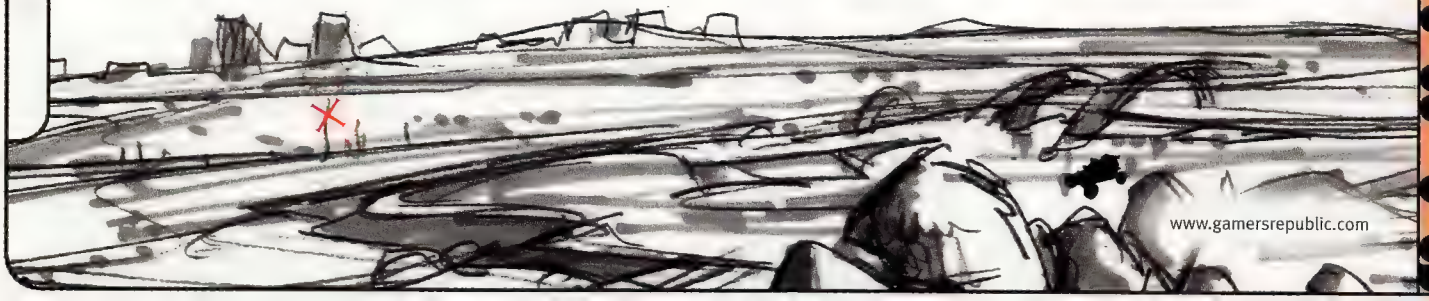
Rockstar and Angel Studios give us the first glimpse of the PS2's power.

You can now see for miles in a video game—and it rocks

We finally received our recommended allowance of PS2 this July, and Angel Studios' Smuggler's Run was the game that initiated the onslaught. This was the first time (well, second, if you count E3) that I have seen a console do something no PC or the Dreamcast can, and that's load in miles of terrain in real time and allow you to assault it with the entire world in plain view at all times. It's quite remarkable, and I can attest first hand, it makes for one helluva video game.

The premise in Smuggler's Run is simple and easy to grasp. In each of the 30 scenarios there exists an item—a secret document, arms, etc.—which you must pick up and attempt to deliver. The game offers several scenarios in which to lay down some rubber. Crooks 'n Smugglers is a two to eight-vehicle free-for-all with one piece of loot and one drop-off point (so you basically grab the goods and haul ass); Loot Grab finds two teams of one to four vehicles in a no-holds-barred battle royal (so if you're not carrying the goods you best run interference); and the Checkpoint game is just one big mad dash with two to eight vehicles racing against each other and the clock. There's even a Joyride if you just want to drive around and check out all of the hard work that went into designing each great expanse. In the main game your goal is to become a honcho to reckon with in the dangerous, dark and illicit world of international smuggling by putting your cajones on the line, or all over the forest, snow, or sand... just make like FedEx and the world will be your oyster. Screw up and they're liable to take you out back for a "talk." Okay, I added that.

One common thread ties all of these scenarios together: they are instantly intelligible, mind-bogglingly vast, and a total gas to play. Smuggler's Run feels like nothing you've played before. The feeling of total freedom is uncanny and the levels give up nothing for the sake of

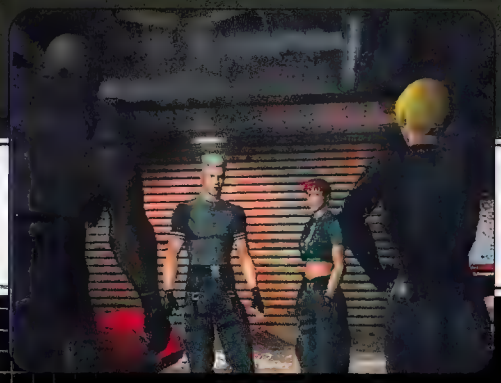


vastness. Little towns and villages are detailed down to the cracks in the adobe, tattered occupants and livestock, and everything on the maps has collision—tight collision. For a first-generation game, this is quite a feat in programming and design. The physics, too, are true: should you happen onto some railroad tracks, you can actually see the independent suspension working, and when you get hung up on a steep incline, depending on the terrain, the vehicle reacts just as it should. Now add the fact that everything will be moving at 60 fps and...well, you get the picture.

We're in for some exciting times in the months and years ahead. There's no doubt that we're witnessing not only the birth of a franchise but a glimpse of what's to come in the vehicular battle-racing genre. **GR**

X SQUAD

BY BRADY FIECHTER



Plugging into the incredible PS2 power source, EA generates the first high-voltage action game for the system

Ash Connors was once an honored member of a military special ops team, but he became disillusioned with his missions and commander, so he decided to form his own gang of the tough and mighty, called X Squad. He and his team of other decorated ex-soldiers—all possessing really cool military names like Maya Esteves and Judd Johnson—now solve problems by going into hostile situations and killing truckloads of terrorists and various assortments of bad guys. When a leader is taken out, his death is often stylized with the freeze-frame rotation of The Matrix Camera (tm).

In the team's latest mission, the head tyrant pulling the strings remains a mystery; all the X Squad knows is that a destructively valuable program known as Project Medusa must be retrieved, along with the hostages ostensibly captured as a result of its existence.

One of the more unique aspects of X Squad is that all four team members are involved intermittently in the action throughout the game, and there is always at least one person by Ash's side lending assistance. Specific tactics can be employed like stealth, follow, assault and diversion, depending on what the circumstance demands. If, say, a motion sensor is positioned in the center of a room, sending a team member out to draw its fire is a perfect way to take it out. Most of the time, the computer-controlled characters love to run wantonly through a hot zone, taking enough fire to bring down a herd of elephants. It's not a good thing when Ash's partner cries out, "What's happening? I can't feel my..." At that point the disabled icon lights up and Ash is on his own.

The action often heats up to a numbing intensity. Run-

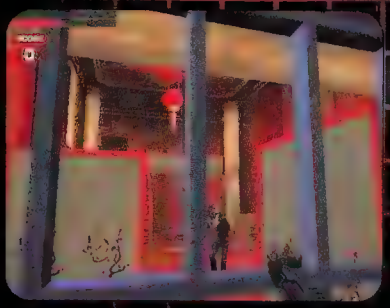
ning into a room without a calculated surveillance of the area is suicide, and a storm of grenades, machine-gun fire and rockets comes pouring down the second strategy is neglected. I like the way the game demands that you find safe spots behind walls, boxes, and pillars. Most of the settings are so capacious that a sniper can be perched at disorienting distances, and clearing a room can take several minutes of ceaseless fire-fighting.

X Squad is a game of rapid-fire, perpetual action sequences, with no other objective than to push lock releases, kill, and move on. The only time for calm is during the voiced real-time movie sequences that detail the story in between the nine levels. Some of the boss sequences are impossibly frenetic, and there are times toward the end of the game that recall old 16-bit action games, where even the slightest lapse in concentration means a bullet in the chest. Here, the glory of 128-bit effects kicks in when the enemy makes a hit, and a metallic body shield absorbs the damage.

When X Squad was shown at last year's TGS, it became strong ammunition for the PS2 opponents pointing their critical weapons at Sony's then-underwhelming new hardware. Now it stands as one of the more visually satisfying games I've played on the PS2, a powerhouse of sophistication and technical artistry. Looking beyond the excellent atmosphere of the industrial, near-future settings, the architectural complexity alone was so interesting in its newness that I often would stop just to admire the structural surroundings. Playing X Squad, I'm as excited as I've ever been about the new possibilities for the future of game making. **GR**

TIME SPLITTERS

BY BRADY FIECHTER



Please direct your attention to the shots above and marvel at the next stage of video-game design

With all these new, high-quality, playable PlayStation 2 games dropping into the office, I feel like a little child at Christmas, unwrapping unexpected treasures that can't be put down till I pass out. So now that I'm in the holiday spirit, here's a list you can give any clueless gift giver that will convince them Time Splitters is the perfect stocking-stuffer.

No. 1: It boasts greatly inventive character designs, from decaying mummies and Chinese waiters to zombies and cyborgs. Not only do they look cool, but they exhibit incredible detail, especially on the faces, and they animate extremely well. The grunts and moans are also a nice touch.

No. 2: The levels are skillfully lit, casting convincing shadows for immense depth and space. Not only do they look amazing - love that Chinatown setting, with its restaurant centerpiece and lantern embellishments - but they are craftily constructed.

No. 3: There are deeply satisfying weapons with which to mow down aggressive opposition. The musket is a classic, packing the close-range force of a large cannon.

No. 4: Hordes of enemies besiege you at once, recalling the manic intensity of the days of Doom. And when you get into the deathmatches, things get even more out of control.

No. 5: There's dual analog control for precision movements - a first for a console FPS.

No. 6: Campy horror theme in the delightful tradition of awful straight-to-video movies can't go wrong. The story takes our unlikely band of heroes--the cop, Nathan Tip, got transported straight out of the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" video--through the past, the present, and the future, tracking down the nasty entities known as Time Splitters.

No. 7: Complex level editor will ensure months of abnormally addictive four-player, 60-fps deathmatches. You can even save your maps on a memory card and explain to your friends why yours is the best.

No. 8: Time Splitters is being designed by a bunch of guys who worked on GoldenEye. One possible worst-case scenario: the game is GoldenEye on PlayStation 2. Oh, no. That would be just horrible. GR

After taking Ridge Racer to unseen heights on PS2, Namco continues its design mastery with GP bike racing

MOTO GP

BY TOM STRATTON

Released in the arcades under the alias GP 500, Moto GP continues the tradition of exceptional arcade-to-console transitions bestowed upon us by Namco. The game is based on the FIM Road Racing World Championship Grand Prix, which centers around extremely focused (or insane) riders rocketing (literally) around some of the world's most punishing tracks on the world's most souped-up and bad-ass super bikes. Sign me up! During a recent media event, Namco had the game about 50 percent playable and already we were able to get a clear understanding about what the game is going to deliver.

Featuring licensed bikes, riders and courses, this game will be the most accurate motorcycle simulator on the market, creating the look and feel of an actual race, in the same sense that Ridge Racer has done for car racing games. The screens speak for themselves, but like any coveted Namco product, watching (or even better, playing) it leaves you stupefied. The amount of detail poured into this game can only be described as staggering. Riders and their bikes take up about the same number of polys as the cars in Ridge Racer, and the courses are mapped extremely close as well, spooning out exact dimensions in track width and distance. I tell you, folks—Namco has much love for us.

Actual riders, including those from the Suzuki racing team, assisted in the computer AI to help players understand the psyche of a super-bike racer: Negotiating corners, learning when to pass, when to brake and when to wait are all going to need to be dialed in before a player can progress and truly squeeze the most out of this almighty racer. All the nuances can be learned during the Single Race mode, but once comfortable, you can open it up in the Season Mode, where you will be able to race in 125, 250 and 500 cc classes.

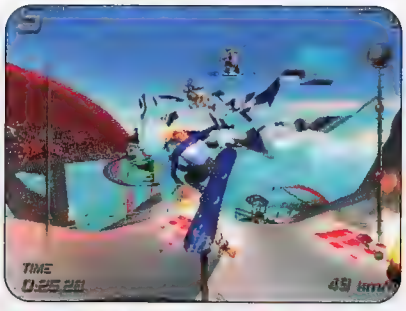
Moto GP appears to be a perfect contrast from the power sliding of Ridge Racer. And just like mastering the controls of Ridge Racer, it is obvious that you'll find the same level of deep satisfaction from studying the bike's performance and nature while on the track. GR

publisher ea • available october

SSX SNOWBOARDING

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Liberated by PS2, EA brings exhilerating newness to the snowboarding genre. Prepare to be thrilled



Jurgen is a burly snowboarder in SSX Snowboarding whose big bald head is so perfectly round and convincingly real, you can practically see the razor burn. Of the colorful gallery of spectacularly designed characters, Elise is the coolest of the cool, her model-like figure so detailed that there is actually the look of toned muscularity formed under her tight-fitting snowsuit. On the course, when she looks back to scope the competition, you might as well be able to read "Gucci" on her stylish black sunglasses—necessary protection from the blinding glow of a perfectly rendered sun.

One look at these and the other four boarders as they ready themselves at the starting gate, camera swooping in for a group close-up after an aerial pass of the strikingly complex mountain terrain, and you won't be able to wipe that goofy grin off your face that says, "Just look at the pretty graphics!"

And then the actual racing begins, and pretty turns to awesome as tremendous sights form all around you. There's the nighttime city course, where the distant sparkle of the urban lights melts

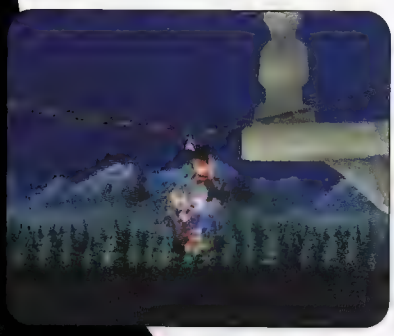
into the golden glow of mountainside lanterns, which illuminate tremendously dense woods at the base of the run. There's the pinball-themed, fantasy-based mountain, with its checkpoints that send you soaring up giant wind tunnels. There are the towering rock cliffs trapping you in, the massive structures extending toward the horizon, the powder from snow machines, the fireworks painting streaks of brilliant colors across the sky, the competitors shooting out from a jump or shortcut so far below that they're but specks against the expanse of the mountain. The PlayStation 2 offers game makers newfound freedoms, and EA has explored these freedoms with little restraint.

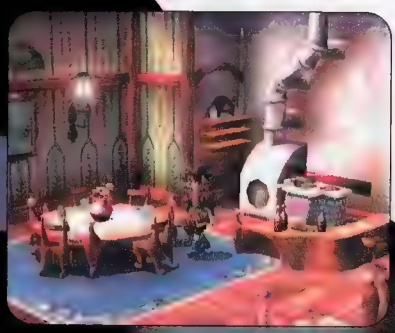
There's such a richness of detail and color and lighting, such a tremendous feeling of speed and presence on an actual mountain, the gameplay seems to almost fall into place naturally and effortlessly. What I love about SSX Snowboarding is that racing is the emphasis, not a pointless display of tricks, and when you do pull off an impressive string of acrobatics, you are rewarded with a rise in the cleverly implemented speed-boost meter. Navigating the winding, obstacle-heavy mountains becomes most entertaining when you have discovered the quickest line to the finish, which is ultimately the most treacherous and exhilarating. Shortcuts are everywhere, and when you cut through a patch of trees surrounded by knee-deep snow, the sensation of passing through heavy, virgin powder is flawless. Sometimes it's best simply going over those shortcuts; launching off the lip of a run and passing over several levels of the course is an incredible rush. It's like the first time you played Wipeout. And like that PlayStation classic, SSX Snowboarding is a game that will convince you that your new hardware is indeed everything you imagined it would be. **GR**

GRANDIA II

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Game Arts gets a second chance to dazzle U.S. gamers. A new day is dawning for RPG fans everywhere





According to more than a few disciples of Sega's inexcusably underappreciated Saturn, Grandia was one of the finest games to be released on the system, and certainly the best RPG. That only importers were able to experience the game the way it was intended - devoted fans tend to malign the weakened PlayStation version - is one of the unfortunate by-products of the premature demise of the Saturn.

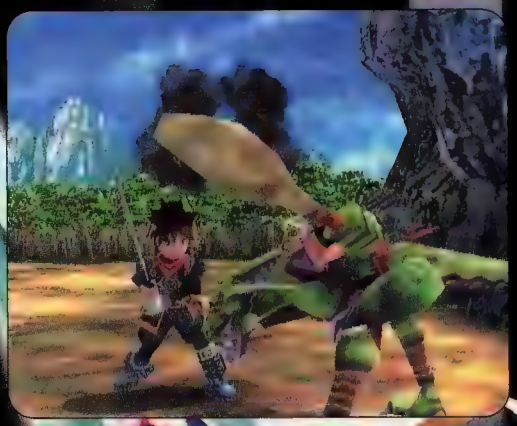
With Grandia II, the only perceivable threat of history repeating itself is that Sega hardware will once again receive a marvelous role-playing game. Now it's up to Ubi Soft to preserve the integrity of the Japanese original. As any RPG veteran knows, the story translation quality can make or break the game, but in Grandia II's case, an equally important challenge must be conquered: the re-recording of over 90 minutes of voice acting. Understanding the importance of convincing dialogue, Ubi Soft has enlisted the skills of Kris Zimmerman, the voice director for Metal Gear Solid.

As for the look of the game, there's no question as to Game Arts' impressive accomplishments. Having only seen the first hour of the game, I was instantly swept into Grandia II's lovely world, which is full of the same unusually vivid palettes of dominant reds, blues and greens that bathed the first game with such a cheerful glow. The battles also look fantastic, with spell effects combining layers of CG for greater detail and impact. "We paid a lot of attention to make the graphics as dynamic as possible," says Mr. Takeshi Miyaji, Game Arts producer and senior director of development. "We wanted to make the characters and the world setting more lively and real in Granida II." Adds Mr. Katsunori Saito, director of development, "It was very important to us that we achieve a feeling of multiple worlds within one world. Textures look more moist or dry depending on where you are. We achieved this with more than just texture density, we also paid a lot of attention to the game's camera work to help create a real-world setting that users can relate to."

Feeling a part of Grandia II's world, falling into the emotional plight of the characters, is some-

times as much a result of what you hear as what you see. Anyone who has played Grandia knows how skilled Game Arts is at building mood with music, and with original composer Noriyuki Iwadare returning to score Grandia II, there is an even deeper emphasis being placed on the use of sound. In an inspired stylistic choice, Game Arts recorded the two songs that appear in the game in Portuguese. Mr. Takeshi says that he wanted something exotic and unfamiliar, and "after much debate, we thought Portuguese was most beautiful and touching."

While sharing in theme and style, Grandia II is unrelated to the events and setting in Grandia. On the surface, the story travels over familiar RPG ground: the devil Valmar awakens 10,000 years after the Battle of Good and Evil, determined to send the world into ruin. You are Ryodo, potential savior of all that is good. Where the story goes from here is "aimed at sophisticated players. Adults can relate more to these characters," says Mr. Takeshi.



After Ryodo and his partner, Skye, befriend a young girl named Elena and begin their journey, the game quickly kicks into dungeon-and-town exploration mode. The battle system is virtually identical to Grandia, with the same time-sensitive command structure sending out the characters to unleash individual combos and fierce attacks. The dungeon structure also seems similar to the original game, which, if true, means the call for exploration will always be welcome.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 116 ▸

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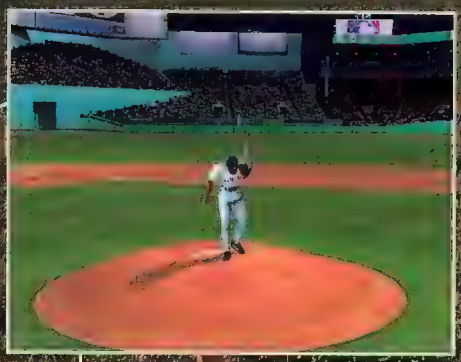
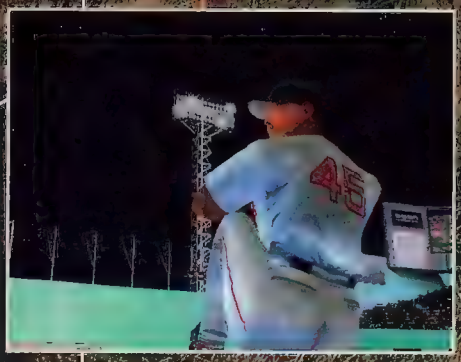
SEGA SPORTS

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K1

Welcome to the Show, meat. It's all here -- detailed player profiles, full 3D ballparks, and ultra-realistic stat-based gameplay. Live it up while you can, though. Because our nastiest pitching engine yet has been designed to find your weaknesses, then hammer them mercilessly. And eventually it's going to be a certain Señor Martinez's turn in the rotation.





Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING

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SOONER OR LATER,
PEDRO COMES FOR US ALL.

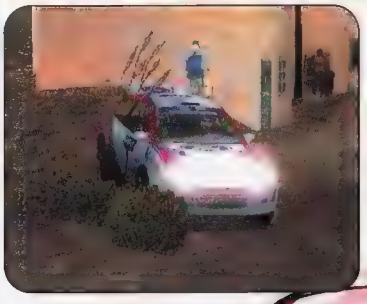
TEST DRIVE V-RALLY

BY DAVE HALVERSON

From Infogrames UK comes the best thing to hit rally since... well, Rally. This is one Test Drive you need to take!

It isn't often that a racing game stirs my soul, but it's certainly a welcome occurrence when one does, as is the case with Infogrames' surprising Test Drive V-Rally. I already know what you're thinking: Test Drive, not exactly a staple for quality racers, right? Normally, I'd concur, but the sturdy (at retail) moniker was obviously tacked on post-production for marketing's sake, because this is a thoroughbred Rally game from a crack team that obviously went to great lengths to produce a timeless racer.

From the moment you power VR up, you know you're in for something special. The slick euro-style interface is easy to navigate and the level in which you can adjust everything is complete, down to the last detail. Manipulate the audio, from the music to the co-pilot and environmental noise, visit the comprehensive track editor, check your game progress, tweak your car in every manner imaginable, or enter one of four modes—Time Trial, Trophy, Championship or Arcade—and see the world. There are five camera angles to choose from, so no matter what your preference—from hood cam to a fairly distant trailing perspective and everything in between (including cockpit)—the game is made to order. Once the racing begins, you'll recognize three things immediately: 1) the music just totally kicks butt; it's some of the best ever; 2) the physics are near perfection, coinciding with the weather and the terrain incredibly well; and 3) the graphics are outstanding. Spectators on the track bolt out of the way as you



approach, and track-side detail is at an all-time high. But wait till you switch on the headlights! A more realistic night driving experience you will not find anywhere. Of course, nothing beats the feeling you get when, say, you're driving along a steep cliff or coastline, and in VR that sensation is uncanny.

As you progress through the Championship rankings, you'll race two legs spanning 12 countries, battling the other drivers' times or, in Arcade or Trophy mode, compete in close proximity with three other cars. Regardless, the frame rate seldom dips below 60 and the sense of competitiveness increases steadily as you make your way through the different classes, from 1.6- and 2-litre models, up to the eight selectable World Rally cars.

Each car is fashioned using over 2,200 polygons, complete with reflection maps and transparent windows so that you can watch your co-pilot bounce around in the impressive and highly interactive replays.

Spiraling down serpentine canyons, blasting through dense forests, and edging along coastal highways has never been so much fun or looked and sounded so good. This is now the definitive rally game to beat. **GR**

- THE GOTH-TECHNO-METAL MUSIC RULES!
- 60 FPS ACTION ALL THE WAY
- SOME OF THE BEST RACING PHYSICS EVER
- IT CLIPS EVER SO SLIGHTLY BUT THE GRAPHICS ARE HOT!

REPUBLIC SAYS... SIMPLY PUT, IF YOU'RE INTO RACING GAMES, YOU ABSOLUTELY NEED TO EXPERIENCE THIS GAME. IT HAS INSANE DEPTH AND IS BEYOND FUN TO PLAY.

A-

The PS' last Final Fantasy game may turn out to be the best one yet, featuring a luscious and delightful visual style and brilliantly simplified gameplay

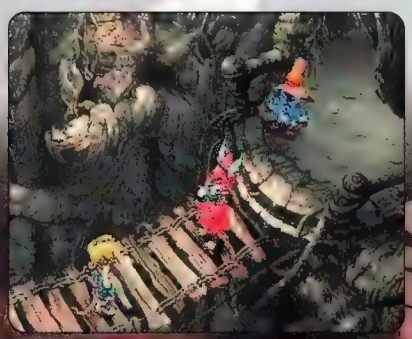
FINAL FANTASY IX

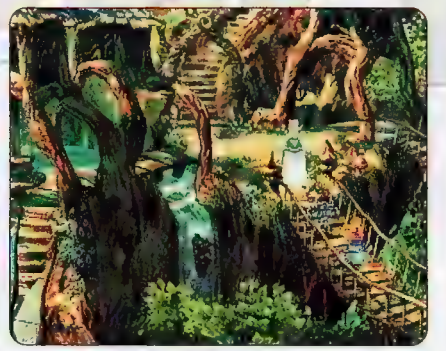
BY MIKE HOBBS

I wasn't expecting to be blown away by Final Fantasy IX. What, I thought, could Square possibly achieve beyond their work in FFVII and VIII? Hadn't we seen the best CG any game deserves? Hadn't we seen prerendered backdrops of the highest order? Hadn't we seen the most glorious real-time manipulation ever in the various call spells and Guardian Forces? But with Final Fantasy IX, Square has defied all, or at least my, expectations, delivering a game of staggering artistry and immense playability, and in the process, making me feel foolish for ever doubting that things would be otherwise.

An informed pessimist, however, might be quick to point out that Square is playing well within the rules of Final Fantasy here, not really offering up anything new in terms of gameplay, even taking a step backwards to the pared-down play of 16-bit entries. Rubbish. The decision to keep FFIX simple was one of Square's most inspired ideas when designing this game.

Especially as this is to be the last 32-bit Final Fantasy, one might have expected a big, ponderous affair, full of self importance, all too aware of its own place in the scheme of things. But in its final form, FFIX is exactly the opposite. It's warm and lighthearted, with a pure and beautiful fantasy aesthetic, including characters bursting with charm and drawn in friendly, deformed proportions. This is not to imply, however, that the game is not epic or awe-inspiring just because it's not dark and serious. The frequent, amazing bursts of CG that highlight the first disc certainly take care of the awe factor, and the level of detail and brilliant use of color in the backdrops quickly spirits away any notions of Square coldly going through the motions. Areas like Cleyra's Trunk and Conde Petie are gorgeous, overflowing with color, and we are reminded of just how high a developer with the resources of Square can take the art. And on the audio side, returning composer Nobuo Uematsu has produced one of his best collections of music. Everything from the delightful overworld theme to the

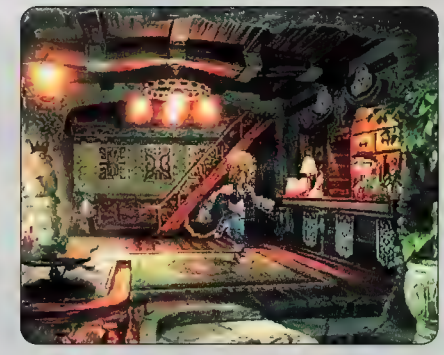




remixed battle music is handled to perfection, providing a beautifully modulated, wonderful sounding backdrop to the game's undistilled fantasy setting.

I must point out, however, that I have been playing and thoroughly enjoying Final Fantasy IX on a purely audio/visual basis, as Square is currently knee deep in the localization process. So, as I have been unable to understand the story of FFIX, I can't make any worthwhile judgements as to the quality of the scenario, only that it takes the player through one of the most beautiful worlds Square has ever conceived. And in a very straightforward fashion as well, for even in Japanese, the game has yet to put up any major obstacles, at least through the first two discs. This might be a worrying thought to some, fearing that Final Fantasy IX will be a cakewalk. It may very well end up being that, but again, this speaks of Square's unique conception of the game, which is cheerful and simple, an unexpected and, I think we'll come to see, perfectly executed end to the 32-bit era of Final Fantasy. And in retrospect, no Final Fantasy game has ever been that difficult.

FFIX is due to ship this November, soon after the launch of the PS2 in America, but even new hardware should not dull the impact of this game. And it certainly will be a while before we see anything so ambitious and painstakingly crafted on the PS2, so for a chance to experience game artistry at its highest level, there will be but one place to turn this winter. **GR**



INTERVIEW WITH MR. NOBUO UEMATSU

COMPOSER OF FINAL FANTASY IX

By Tatsuki Miura with Chris Hoffman and Mike Hobbs

GR: We are very glad to play FFIX finally. Thank you for your fine work. Anyway, how long did it take to finish the music?
Nobuo Uematsu: After I finished FFVIII, I went to the Square Hawaii office last May, then began to work on FFIX music last June, so it took about 11 months. It was easier than previous works for the FF series, since I normally only have about six months to complete my music. But how hard I worked remained almost the same because I had more time, so I spent longer composing.

GR: When did you first learn that you had an interest in music?
NU: Well, I didn't learn piano, violin, or any classical music instruments when I was young. When I was in 5th or 6th grade, I started listening to midnight radio, and they would play hit songs. At that time, I began to play the piano and guitar.

GR: Did you learn on a real piano or a synthesizer?
NU: Well, at that time, there was only one keyboard, maybe it was from Yamaha, and it was very expensive, so I learned on a normal piano.

GR: When did you start composing music?
NU: As soon as I began to play the piano and guitar, and the reason was simple: the songs that I heard on the radio were very difficult for me to play, so I thought I would write my own music that I could play [laughs]. Then, when I was in high school, I started to dream about making a living through music. At first, I used simple sequencers, then, when I was a university student, I bought a Yamaha MSX (an 8-bit PC based on Microsoft's MS-Basic) since it had a MIDI sequencer and interface. I think that I composed music for FFI through FFIII using this machine. After FFIII, I began using the Macintosh platform.

GR: How did you begin to work for Square?
NU: Well, one of my university friends started to plan PC games before Square was really established as a company. At that time, there were only about 10 people, including part-time workers, and of course there wasn't any such thing as Final Fantasy yet; Square was just a very small company making PC games. He asked me to write sheet music for an appendix of a game guide, and that's how I began to write game music for Square. You know, I don't I think I ever submitted a resume to Square [laughs].

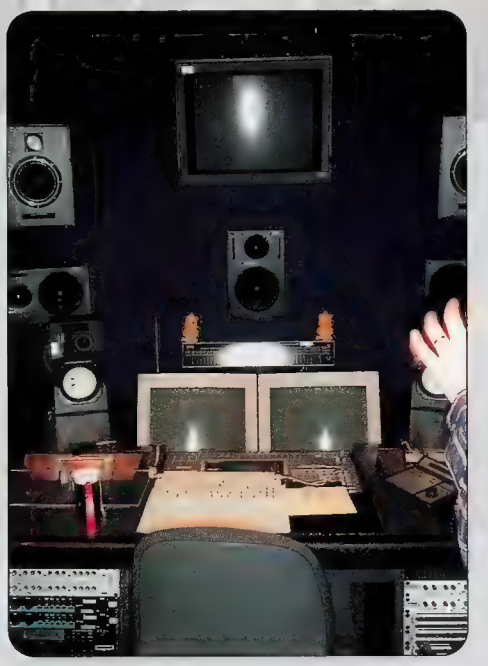
GR: What sort of feel were you going for with the overall sound in FFIX, and are you satisfied with the results?
NU: Personally, I am very satisfied with my work this time, but when I checked game bulletin boards, I felt a little disappointment since there were many criticisms. On the other hand, there was praise as well. But I could work easily since I thought that I would write music more like the 16-bit FF series in terms of mood, because the main concept of FFIX is the regression to the original games.

GR: At what stage in Final Fantasy IX's development did you begin to compose the music? What materials were given to you by Square to help guide you?
NU: Well, I did not join in at the planning stage of development. At the time I began to write music, the scenario was already finished, and I could see a lot of artworks, including characters' sketches and the world images.

GR: Do you have to compose music of specific lengths for FFIX's movie scenes, and is this easier?
NU: Yes, I do. I write music to fit exactly within the movie scenes without any mismatching in each frame. It is easier for me to write for these scenes rather than each character's theme song. When it has limitations, such as the music length must be 13.7 seconds, I have to put all the elements in it and I think, O.K. I'll just put everything in. It's much easier than writing without limitations.

GR: How much freedom are you given with regards to the composition of music?
NU: Although there had been some limitations at the time of FFI & II, I can write very freely these days.

GR: How do you write music? Do you play any musical instruments first or do you directly write the score?



What kind of hardware and software do you use to compose music?
NU: I play first. Mostly, I use piano, but it is often hard to make string instruments (guitar, ukulele, and banjo) phrases, so I play these instruments in this case. In addition, a C note played by piano and a C played by guitar is different, right? As to the technical side of things, basically, I use a Macintosh, a Roland SC-88 Pro, and Vision.

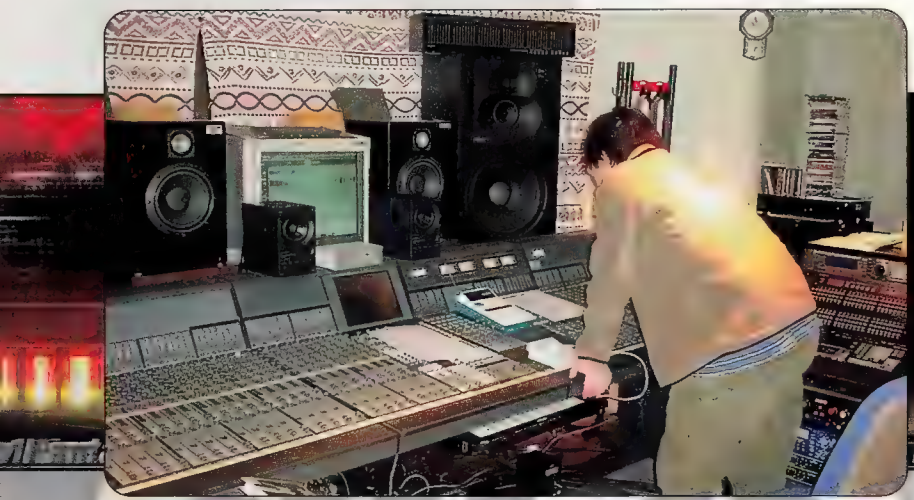
GR: Is the music composed as we hear it, or is there a process of encoding the music for the PlayStation's sound chip?
NU: We have to encode it for the PS1 sound chip.

GR: Do you enjoy working within the limitations of the PlayStation's sound chip, getting the most out of it?
NU: Sometimes I feel it would be better if a real violinist could play instead of using the PS1 sound chip. But if I am asked whether I enjoy working within the limitations of the PS1 sound chip, I would say I enjoy it. Many musicians give up since the sound chip capacity of a video-game machine is not enough for them. In my case, I enjoy how high the game music level can be. As to whether I have been getting the most out of the sound chip, I don't think that I have used all of PS1's capabilities. I can do much more. For example, if the PS1 sound chip doesn't have any more capacity, then the music can be made better during the initial process of creation. Currently, we input MIDI data by step recording. Now, instead of step recording, we could collect MIDI data for all string instruments, and let them play at the same time. In this case, the tonal quality remains the same, but the sound expression will be much better. Well, I wanted to try this, but the PS1 era has passed away [laughs].

GR: Then is the FF soundtrack CD recorded with a higher sampling rate?
NU: No. I use exactly the same sound from the original game CD. It may be only a little equalized, but mostly I don't change it from the original. Part of the reason for this is when I want to listen to old ['70s or '80s] animation soundtracks, I want to listen to them exactly as they were, rather than rearranged or rerecorded. That is the proper way, don't you think?

GR: Have you begun working yet on the music for FFX on PS2?
NU: Well, I have already begun. But to be honest, I wanted to have a vacation and refresh myself, but I couldn't.

GR: I have heard that Square has two teams for the FF series. Is this true? If so, is this also true for the sound team?
NU: When did you hear this? Last year? Well, actually, the FFVIII team and the FFIX team are different. The FFVIII team is in Tokyo, and the FFIX team is in Hawaii, so that's why I went to Hawaii after I finished with FFVIII. The sound team is the same, although some members, such



as the sound effect people, differ.

GR: How many people are on your sound team?
NU: Basically, the team, including sound effects artists, is about 10 people.

GR: How will the PS2's capabilities alter the way you approach game music?
NU: Well, I want to try everything I have experienced. Of course, I want to try 5.1 channel Dolby surround, but I am not sure if I will use it for the actual music. In the early stages of using 5.1 channels, most people used it for sound effects, such as a missile launched from right-front to left-back. In my opinion, I would rather use 5.1 channels to create a mood that you are deep in a forest, for example.

GR: Has composing become easier or more difficult over time?
NU: Well, I cannot answer that simply. During the FFI period, we could only write music with three sounds, like a modern cellular phone melody. It seems that using only three sounds is easier than using 32 sounds, which is the PS1's capability, but today's sound chip has more expression, freedom, and sympathy, so in that regard, it is easier to write music. In addition, music development software is getting more useful day by day, so overall, I would say composing music has become easier.

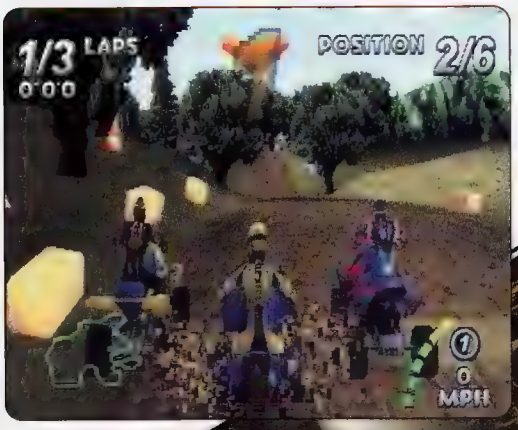
GR: How would you compare composing film music and composing game music? How do you think the two processes could relate to each other, and how are they different?
NU: The main difference is the function of music. In a movie, everything is real, such as the characters, sound effects, voice, environments, etc. In a game, everything is not realistic; characters are mostly cartoonish, dialogue is mostly shown by text, etc. As a result, to have more expression in a game, music must have a greater prominence than in a movie. If music were played in a movie as much as in a game, it might be disagreeable.

GR: What's next for you outside of the Final Fantasy universe?
NU: Well, there are many things which I cannot talk about [smiles]. Personally, there are so many things I want to do. Although I have never approached anyone, I want to write a song for singers outside of the game world. I also want to make my own label. I want to compose music that makes people feel warm hearted, what some might call healing music. I also want to produce musicians, so please send me demo tapes [laughs].

GR: What other activities do you enjoy besides creating beautiful music?
NU: I enjoy watching DVDs with my 5.1 channel surround system, making soba [Japanese noodles] from paste, riding my Vespa [European scooter], and collecting musical instruments, although I have sort of given this up since I have no more room.

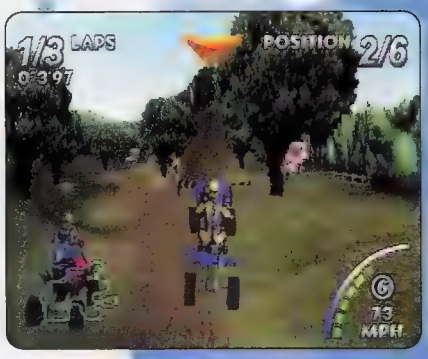
GR: Is music that you listen to, compose, and play different?
NU: Yes, it is. For listening, I like all kinds of music, with jazz probably being my favorite. For composing, I like love ballads with vocals. When playing, I like simple music such as blues or rock.

GR: Finally, what does Final Fantasy mean to you?
NU: [Long pause] Final Fantasy is a little bit like a benefactor. Once, I had thought of FF as my life's work, but I do not think this way anymore since I don't think I will continue to work on FF forever. I consider FF as my alma matter! Someday, I have to graduate. **GR**



ATV: QUAD power racing

BY DAVE HALVERSON



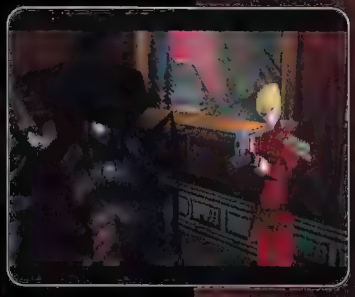
After hundreds of games, yet another unique PS title emerges. The first quad racer in over five years is good to go

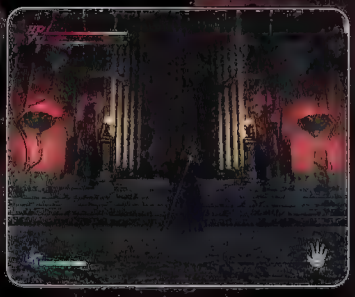
Wow! It only took five years for a quad racing game to make its way onto the PlayStation. Nothing like taking your time, eh? Better late than never though, I suppose, as Acclaim's ATV: Quad Power Racing is shaping up to be a great-looking and playing game.

Beyond the prerequisite FMV and highly slick techno interface lies a solid racer with a steady frame rate, some truly inspired music, and staying power to burn—not to mention that it's based on one of the coolest sports on the planet. The control is simple enough, with smooth analog steering and L and R providing the heavy lean needed to swing a quad around tight corners, and there's a camera angle here for everyone. Depending on the terrain—mountain, snow, or desert—different-style quads are offered to fit each venue. The rider list includes shapely females as well as the usual leather-clad dudes your used to. Modes include Championship (Amateur or Pro), Single Race to hone your skills, Time Attack, and two-player, which allows head-to-head racing in Time Attack or Single Race. There are some 12 tracks, and each hosts a quiver of shortcuts and pro lines that open up as you progress.

The first quad racing game since Namco's Quad Challenge for the Genesis is a cool one. This one's a no-brainer for anyone lookin' to shoot some roosts four-wheel style. GR

HUNTER D

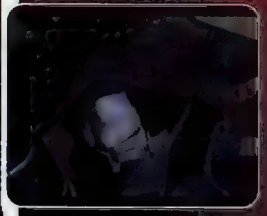




VAMPIRE HUNTER D

BY SHOLA AKHINUSO

Moody and promising, Jaleco's anime-true Vampire Hunter D does better Castlevania 3D than Konami's Castlevania in 3D



Jaleco sent us an early Vampire Hunter D, and while the game's backgrounds look a little grainy, and the characters a bit blurred on the aging PS, the title more than makes up for the hardware's limitations with no short amount of ambiance. Blending the sometimes jazzy, but more often Gothic, soundtrack with a setting that's pulled directly from the Vampire Hunter D anime, the only limitation we've seen is the game's awkward play control. The programmers at Jaleco must have believed it would be a great idea to mix Resident Evil's static backgrounds, fixed camera angles, and puzzle-emphasized exploration with the more action-oriented aspects of crate jumping and real-time sword battles. At this early stage in the game, the components come together a bit clumsier than they probably intended, but it's still salvageable.

To its credit, Vampire D is gorgeous to look at. At least for a modest-budgeted PS game. Anime doesn't normally translate well, and Jaleco spent a bit of effort to capture the feel through artistic details. Good thing, too. These actually overcome the game's shortcomings. D, cloaked in a flowing black cape and armed with his body-length sword, draws more than a few comparisons to Castlevania's Alucard, and perhaps the Castlevania reference is as good an indicator and a compliment to the direction this game is going if Jaleco touches up a few spots. D's anime-true story, great production, and honest intent might make this a better Castlevania 3D than Castlevania 3D. I don't know a soul who'd complain about that. GR

CRASH BASH

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Crash Bandicoot leaves his auspicious home at Naughty Dog, looking for new success as star of arena fighting

There are two types of video game-induced fits of profanity-laced rage. Type one stems from playing games of classic ineptitude like Superman or Sword of Sodan. Type two can be attributed to really good multiplayer games. Get a few friends together, start talking trash, stomp on each other's bloated pride, and the animalistic atmosphere is intoxicating. Expect Crash Bash, the arena-based battle game that's at its best in the company of three friends, to stand tall as a type-two experience.

Seven entirely unique events build the coliseum of competition in Crash Bash. Competitors battle in groups of up to four, chosen from a recognizable pool of Crash Bandicoot characters including Crash, Tiny, Dr. N. Cortex, Coco, Dingodile and Koala Kong. In the tradition of keep-it-simple gameplay, the big guys have the strength and power, the little guys have the speed and quickness.

To hone your skills and reveal everything Crash Bash has to offer, the place to start is Adventure mode. Here, relics, trophies and crystals must be earned to progress to new zones, which are guarded by four different level bosses, like the giant polar bear who tosses bazooka-toting mechanical dogs onto the teetering plate of ice you must claim as king of the hill. Objectives are basically the same as the Battle and Tournament events: be the last man standing, reach the highest score.

Like the best multiplayer battle games, Crash Bash is easy to get into and deceptively involving. An oval race course no wider than the screen may seem ineffectively basic, but it works like an 8-bit charm. And no arena is any less entertaining than the other, whether you're bouncing on pogo sticks around a colored-tile field or caught in a frenetic Pong-inspired crossfire of steel balls. As for the Ballistix event, just wait till your opponent gets the magnetic powerup; there'll be no denying Crash Bash is a type-two experience. GR

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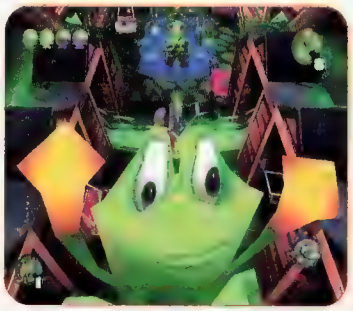
PS2 PlayStation Dreamcast NINTENDO64

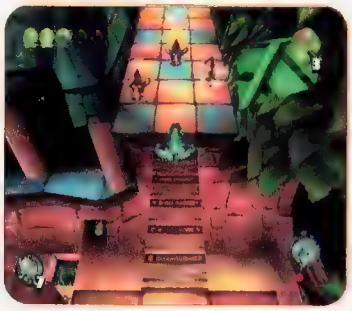
FROGGER

preview by **b. fiechter** • *dev/pub:* **hasbro** • *avail:* **september**

Go play Code Veronica or Final Fantasy IX or Ridge Racer V, and then shake the dust off your Atari and play Frogger. Amazing, isn't it, just how far we've come? So why Frogger on Dreamcast? Because as we all know, you can't ignore nostalgia.

Just the name alone is going to reel in gamers who love to hang onto the past, and the top-down 3D levels that re-create the old arcade scenarios are going to make Frogger fans pleased. But really the only thing old-school Frogger about this game is that you jump—vertically and horizontally only, of course. From 3D haunted houses to laboratories to factories, this is not your Atari Frogger, and there are even an alligator and kangaroo to control. Both of these characters still jump, just like the frog, from one obstacle to the next, avoiding lawnmowers, boulders, axes, deep pits, monsters, and bolts of electricity. Get the old-school reflexes sharpened for this one. **GR**

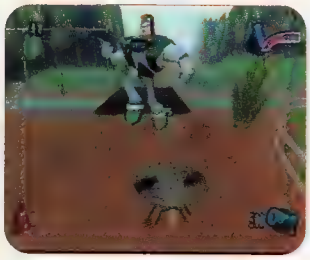


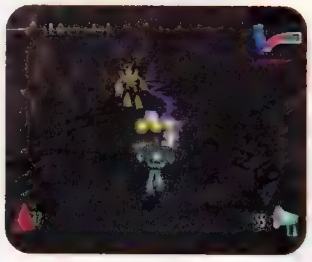


BUZZ LIGHTYEAR

preview by **d. halverson** • *dev:* **traveller's tale** • *pub:* **activision** • *avail:* **fall**

Unlike Activision's other Toy Story, the respectable Toy Story 2, which also features the thorn in Woody's side, Buzz Lightyear, Buzz Lightyear has been designed from the ground up specifically for the Dreamcast by the talented UK developer, Traveller's Tale. Running at a silky smooth 60 fps and exhibiting some sweet textures, the game offers up some unique gameplay. Rather than the usual run-and-gun, Buzz Lightyear incorporates racing elements into the fray, as well as multiple paths and both air- and ground-based enemies. Not directly derived from the movie, the universe has been somewhat expunged for Buzz' first solo run, resulting in a fresh new look far removed from the world of gigantic furniture and expansive backyards. Even the fruity music that plagues the series has been cast out and replaced by some respectable BGM. There's obviously lots more to talk about on this one, so stay tuned. **GR**





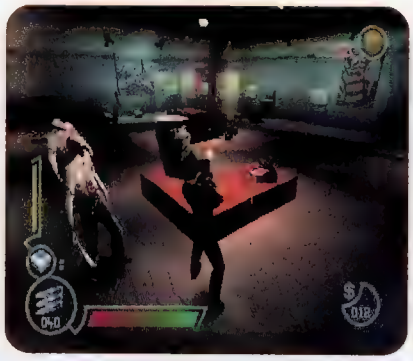
BLADE

preview by **s. thomason** • *dev:* **hammerhead** • *pub:* **activision** • *avail:* **fall**

Following in the footsteps of its cinematic counterpart, Blade on PlayStation allows the player to take on the role of the world's "baddest" vampire hunter as he cuts down the blood-sucking undead through 21 gritty levels. Activision's Blade takes place sometime before the movie and tells an original story through in-game cut-scenes using an updated version of the PlayStation Quake II engine. This formidable engine allows for complex architecture, solid environments, and impressive lighting effects on Sony's aging hardware.

Playing a little bit like Soul Reaver with guns, Blade offers both a full arsenal of weaponry and an impressive repertoire of hand-to-hand maneuvers. With 34 different kinds of creatures to vanquish, you'll need every bit of offensive firepower you can muster. Thankfully, an auto-aiming system helps Blade target whichever evil nemesis presents the most immediate danger.

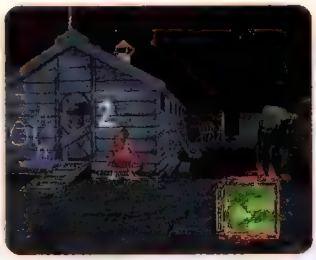
At this point in the game's development, the action moves a little slow and definitely needs to be kicked up a notch to really capture the spirit of the film. There wasn't a lot of exploration and searching for keys in the movie, so it's a bit disappointing to see such tasks in the game. Let's hope the final product is something more frenetic and fast-paced. **GR**



CHICKEN RUN

preview by **c. hoffman** • *dev:* **blitz** • *pub:* **eidos** • *avail:* **november**

It could be called Metal Gear Solid: Chicken Edition. Well, maybe not exactly, but Eidos' PlayStation game based on the Chicken Run flick has a lot in common with MGS. As Ginger (one of the main characters in the movie), players need to sneak about the farm, hiding in the shadows and avoiding guard dogs and farm hands as they try to help Ginger escape her fate of winding up in a pot pie. Ginger even has use of an MGS-style radar to help avoid enemies! Gameplay is mission-based, as Ginger tries to find seemingly useless equipment to build inventions (like a catapult or a flying machine) to use in the chickens' escape attempts. Exploration segments are combined with numerous mini-games and boss battles for a variety of play styles, and players can even control other characters (like Nick the rat). With graphics and gameplay looking good so far, Chicken Run should be more than just another movie game. **GR**



R2R ROUND 2

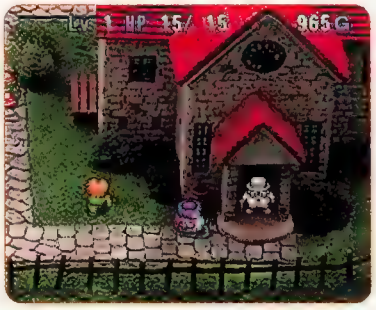
preview by **c. hoffman** • *dev:* **midway** • *pub:* **midway** • *avail:* **november**

Midway's over-the-top slugfest is coming back for a rematch in Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2. Building off the success of the original, R2R2 has all the ingredients that the original had and more, including extremely detailed, seamless character models that feature fantastic, exaggerated animations. The facial expressions are second to none, and there are loads of entertaining taunt and victory poses...plus there's bounciness that puts Mai Shiranui to shame. According to Midway, 11 fighters from the original Ready 2 Rumble are returning to the ring this time, such as Afro Thunder, Lulu Valentine, Butcher Brown, and Angel Rivera. They'll be joined by seven new fighters, including stereotypical big-chinned mobster Joey T and Queen Shaniquoi, a jive-talkin' sister. Hidden celebrity boxers are also scheduled to be included—even a famous musician. The gameplay is still about fast-paced arcade-style brawling, and all the headbutts, uppercuts and special moves from the first game are back in full form. The returning characters will even have new moves and extra punch animations. Another nice feature is the excellent camera control; you can even play in first-person mode. If the success of the original was any indication, Midway should have another "hit" on its hands with Ready 2 Rumble 2. **GR**

TORNEKO, THE LAST HOPE

preview by **c. hoffman** • *dev:* **chunsoft** • *pub:* **enix** • *avail:* **winter**

It's been a long, long time since a Dragon Warrior game has come out for U.S. consoles, but that trend is about to be broken. No, not the long-awaited Dragon Warrior VII; it's a side-story called World of Dragon Warrior: Torneko, The Last Hope. Extremely popular in Japan, this nontraditional RPG is a spin-off that takes a simplified approach to role-playing. Players take on the role of the heavy-set mustachioed adventurer Torneko (who reminds me of Mario), and get to explore randomly-generated dungeons and battle enemies in top-down turn-based combat. Much like Chocobo's Dungeon, there are no random battles to get sucked into, and enemies get to move through the dungeon—or attack if they're within range—with each step you take. As you'd expect, there are plenty of items, weapons and other equipment to find and use on your explorations. The graphics in Torneko are charming. Backgrounds are built from clay, but they have an almost photo-realistic look and are filled with detail and colors. The characters, meanwhile, are hand-drawn sprites that give the game an excellent traditional-RPG feel. There's even an amusing claymation intro (complete with vomiting monsters). Currently Enix is working on completing the game's translation, and they hope to have the game out before the end of the year. Torneko should be a fine addition to the Dragon Warrior lineage. **GR**



Nene: The voice you heard was the banker. He's been talking about building a bank in the village and has bought a mansion in the square.

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UFC

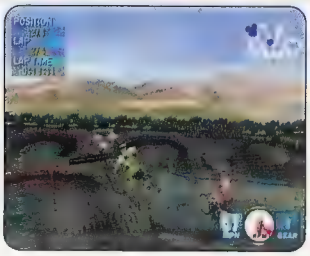
preview by **c. hoffman** • *dev:* **opus** • *pub:* **crave** • *avail:* **october**

The brutality and action of the Ultimate Fighting Championship are coming to the PlayStation this fall. Though developed by a different company than the stellar Dreamcast game, many similarities between the two versions are readily apparent. For one, the game has the same list of 22 of the UFC's toughest fighters, including Frank Shamrock, Maurice Smith, Gary Goodridge and Chuck Liddel, each with his unique moves and styles. This version also shares the same attention to graphic detail, as the characters are very impressive for PS and fight with beautifully animated moves. In all, UFC has 12 distinct fighting styles (including submission fighting, jiu-jitsu and kickboxing) and hundreds upon hundreds of moves and combos. Numerous modes will also be included, such as Road to the Championship, a 16-player tournament, a custom fighter mode, training mode and exhibition matches. If you want authentic presentation, it's here too: real UFC announcer Bruce Buffer and ref John McCarthy are featured. However, when it comes to the fighting action, the engine is completely different than the one used in the Dreamcast version: the game's a bit slower and more methodical, the developers at Opus seem to be going for a play style closer to a wrestling game than a fighter, although the instant-loss submission holds are still going to be featured. It'll be a huge feat if UFC turns out to be as good as the DC version. **GR**

MCGRATH 2000

preview by **d. halverson** • *dev/pub:* **acclaim** • *avail:* **august**

The big news on this year's McGrath offerings, was an all-new engine that incorporated realistic psychics and animation, a slew of factory racers like Dowd, Albertyn, and Pastrana and the benefit of direct input from Jeremy himself whom is touted as an "avid gamer." Well, so far, not so good. The N64 version featured bikes that felt like they weighed a ton, iffy frame rates, and stiff animation at best. The look and feel of real motocross, aside from the well-represented locales, was sorely lacking. Things are looking better on DC so far, but not by much. While the game certainly looks gorgeous the animation is still stiff, the bikes still feel heavy, and the frame rate dips like Monica in the oval office. If they clean up these flaws before the game is released everything else is looking fabulous. I've got pretty much everything crossed. **GR**



KESSEN

preview by **m. hobbs** • *dev:* **koei** • *pub:* **ea** • *avail:* **fall**

Koei's wealth of quality military strategy games, including classics like Nobunaga's Ambition and Romance of the Three Kingdoms, has earned them a small but devout following over the years. That following could grow immensely when gamers get a load of Kessen, Koei's first PS2 title.

Using the epic, nation-defining struggle between the Tokugawa and Ishida clans from Japanese history as its backdrop, Kessen is most noteworthy for the sheer visual impact of its battle scenes, played out in stunning real-time sequences. Charging brigades, walls of cannons, rows of rifle shooters, and dramatic jousting enliven the predictably and unavoidably dry nature of the troop movement and management elements of the game, good though they may be, imparting a sense of visual excitement not typically associated with the genre.

Currently, EA is in the process of translating the voluminous exposition present in the Japanese version of the game, going so far as to re-render the DVD FMV to reflect the localized voice, and the end result should be good. Though to be honest, I could have lived with subtitles and the original Japanese dialogue for the full effect of the period and setting. But EA wants this game to be as accessible as possible, and considering the very foreign subject matter, I can't blame them for that. After all, this isn't Kurosawa. **GR**

ECW ANARCHY RULZ

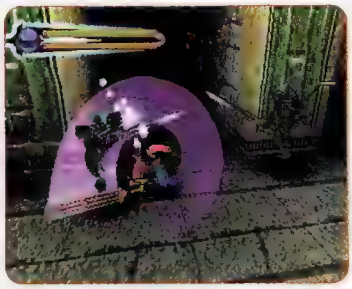
preview by **c. hoffman** • *dev:* **iguana** • *pub:* **acclaim** • *avail:* **august**

Acclaim is stepping back into the ring yet again with ECW Anarchy Rulz. Subscribing to the if-it-ain't-broke-enough-to-hurt-sales-don't-fix-it theory, Acclaim isn't changing much with this foray into the squared circle. Sure, there's the updated character roster with some 60 fighters (new grapplers include the Sandman and Dusty Rhodes) and extra play modes (such as dumpster match, hate match, and stable career match), but for the most part it's the same wrestling game we've been playing since WWF Attitude, right down to the motion-captured animations and the hair styles in the character edit mode. Actually, Acclaim has taken some criticisms to heart and simplified the controls a bit, but if you didn't like them before, chances are you won't like this modified scheme either. When it comes to sheer variety and play modes, though, Anarchy Rulz may have the competition pinned to the mat. **GR**

BLADE ARTS

preview by **c. hoffman** • *dev:* **ea co. ltd.** • *pub:* **enix** • *avail:* **fall**

Deviating a bit from the types of games they're known for, Enix is bringing 3D sword-swinging action-adventure to the PlayStation in the form of Blade Arts. When a team of explorers disappears investigating a mysterious island, the hero, Shidoh, goes to the island to find them. But when he gets there, he doesn't find the explorers; he finds a secret underground society filled with all kinds of enemies that want to dice him up! Fortunately Shidoh can use all sorts of weapons (approximately 15) and elemental powers to battle the enemies, but it won't be easy since the emphasis is on fighting multiple enemies at once and strategizing how to take them all out. Designed by Nobutero Yuuki (the character designer from the popular anime series *Escaflowne* and *Record of Lodoss War*), the characters in Blade Arts are some of the most interesting and inspired we've seen in a game of this type. Hopefully the rest of Blade Arts will follow suit. **GR**



DYNASTY WARRIORS 2

preview by **m. hobbs** • *dev/pub:* **koei** • *avail:* **fall**

If the processing power of the PS2 ever comes into question, one need only look at Koei's Dynasty Warriors 2 for a quick demonstration of the Emotion Engine's raw number-crunching ability. Sure, we'll see far more amazing things in the future, but for the time being, few things have induced such awe as seeing a screen filled to overflowing with warriors, as happens often in Dynasty Warriors 2.

An all-out action game rather than a one-on-one fighter like its predecessor, the Omega Force-developed DW2 is nothing but a nonstop slash fest as you tear your way through literally hundreds and hundreds of enemy troops. You can get on horseback for a bit of equestrian carnage, and there are numerous combos and special attacks for each character, a tell-tale sign of Omega Force's keen gameplay sense. Though to be honest, by level's end, with hundreds of kills to your credit, even the solid control and inherently satisfying action cannot quite sustain interest in the experience.

When we get a localized version of Dynasty Warriors 2, perhaps some hidden depth will be uncovered, as there does seem to be some minor management capabilities built into the game. But even if not, this amazing-looking action game will surely stun players this October. **GR**

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gamers' republic REVIEWS

GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

Domestic Reviews

Action Bass PS	D+
Aero Wings 2 DC	C+
Ecco the Dolphin DC	A-
Gunbird 2 DC	C+
Magical Racing Tour DC	C
Mario Tennis N64	A-
Pro Pinball: Big Race PS	B-
Pro Pinball: F.J. PS	C+
Sega GT DC	B+
Spider-man PS	A-
Tenchu 2 PS	C+
Test Drive V-Rally	A-
Tokyo Extreme 2 DC	B
UFC DC	B+
Valkyrie Profile PS	B+
WWF Royal Rumble DC	C+

Import Reviews

Bikkuri Mouse	C+

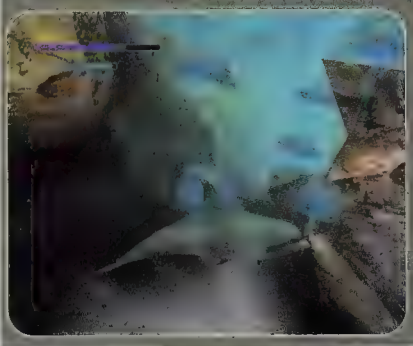
Sports Reviews

GameBreaker 2001 PS	B-
Madden NFL 2001 PS	A-
NCAA Football 2001 PS	B-
NFL GameDay 2001 PS	B+
NFL QB Club 2001 DC	C
W.S. Baseball 2K1 DC	C

Handheld Reviews

KOF Battle Paradise NGP	B
Ogre Battle NGP	B
Rockman B&F NGP	C-
X-men Mutant Academy GBC	D

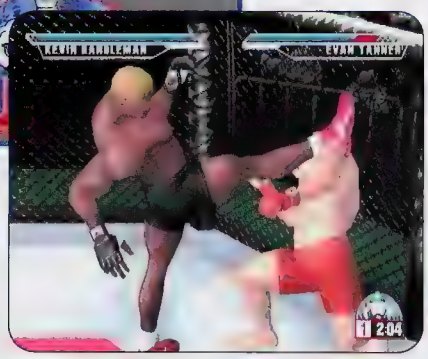
GAME OF THE MONTH

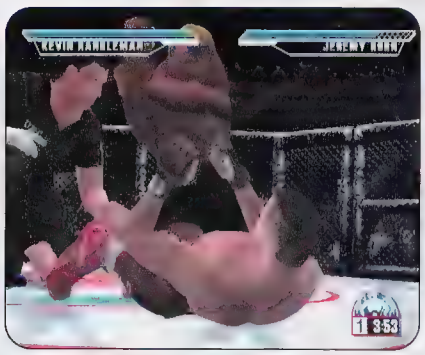


Ecco: Defender of the Future

developer: appaloosa • publisher: sega

An underwater adventure that will tax your mind as well as your skills, and it's a marked leap in many graphical areas. Ecco is special, pure and simple.





ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

BY Chris Hoffman

Pulse-pounding, bone-breaking violence burns up the Dreamcast in the ultimate experience for UFC fans

Two words: brutal realism. That sums up Crave's Ultimate Fighting Championship pretty well. It would have been easy for a company to make a UFC game and just ride on the license alone, but developer Anchor has captured all the action, intensity and true violent nature of the competition with awesome visuals and astounding attention to detail. It's also one of the best 3D fighters to hit Dreamcast yet.

The development team has an awesome pedigree; members have worked on some of the biggest fighting hits ever (including Tekken, Soul Edge, and Tobal), and it shows. The Tekken-like combat is brutal to the max, filled with thousands of hard-hitting punches, kicks, combos and holds that will make you wince in pain. Get your opponent in a compromising position and you can mount and pummel him in the face without mercy, or even worse, deliver brain-smashing hammer blows to the back of the skull. Even though the blood doesn't splatter gratuitously like in some games, you'll see the red stuff flow when you land a particularly nasty hit. Hell, you'll practically feel it too.

Graphically, UFC is simply amazing. The characters are some of the most detailed we've seen in a fighting game, with astounding chiseled character models and textures that pay attention to the most minute detail. Every facet of the 22 real-life fighters, from authentic clothing to tattoos to moles on the faces, has been re-created flawlessly. The characters have facial expressions that change as they attack, get hit, or are put in a hold, and they have mannerisms and win poses (complete with open-mouthed yells) that look like their real-life counterparts. Thanks to the wealth of moves and 12 distinct fighting styles, none of

the characters fight the same, either. Even the octagon arena is so detailed that you can see blood stains from battles gone by. The ring entrances are something else entirely. By combining a CG crowd with the in-game character models and layered text, Anchor has created awesome character intros for the best presentation ever done in a game of this type.

UFC doesn't skimp on modes either. Players can fight in the UFC tournament to win the belt, then defend it in Championship Road mode. Alternately, you can battle a friend in versus mode or fight with up to eight players in tournament combat. If the pure fighting action weren't enough, UFC also has a career mode where you create a custom fighter and train him through a series of progressively tougher battles to become a fighting master.

However, UFC has one flaw: the instant-loss submission holds. It doesn't matter how much you've worn down your enemy's stamina or endurance meter (or how much he's worn down on yours), 'cause if either one of you successfully slap on a submission hold, it's all over. True, you can counter all submissions if you know how, but you need to hit the same buttons your opponent uses to initiate the hold, which means you need to know every submission for every character to counter effectively. And if an inexperienced player fights anyone who's tried it before—or even worse, the reversal-happy CPU—just forget about it. Sure, it's like the real UFC, where one mistake can cost you the match no matter what, but that realism comes at the cost of a more enjoyable game. If only Crave had made it so you had to wear down a body part before applying the submission, or at least made it an option, the matches would be more fair and last longer.

To heck with that: UFC is an awesome game anyway. Great controls, great presentation, great fun. Whether you're a UFC diehard or just a casual fighting fan, Ultimate Fighting Championship is a must-play DC title. **GR**

- INCREDIBLY DETAILED GRAPHICS
- ASTOUNDING TV-STYLE PRESENTATION
- RESPONSIVE, FUN FIGHTING ENGINE
- ANNOYING INSTANT-LOSS SUBMISSION HOLDS

REPUBLIC SAYS... AN AWESOME FIGHTING GAME BACKED BY TONS OF MOVES AND GREAT VISUALS, MARRED ONLY BY THE SOMEWHAT CHEAP SUBMISSION HOLDS.

B+

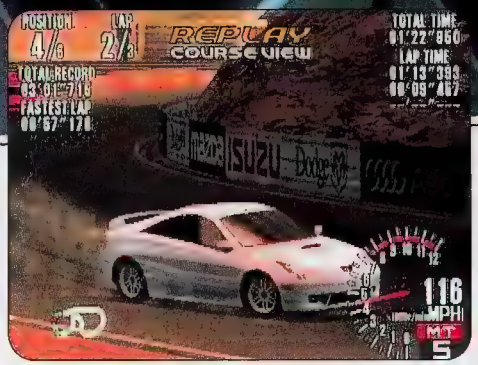
SEGA GT

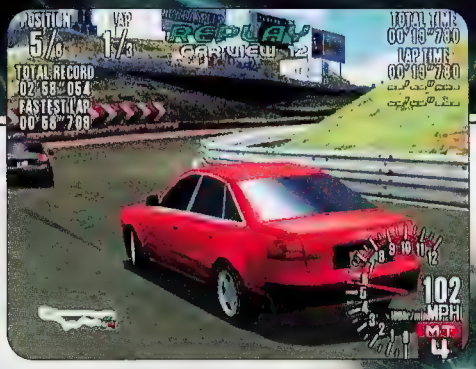
BY MIKE HOBBS

Let's dispense with the usual editorializing and get right to the heart of the issue: Is Sega GT a better game than Gran Turismo 2? Well, in an objective sense, no, it is not. But subjectively, the game's right there, and with the added benefit of super solid visuals, it's more or less neck and neck with GT2. How's that for a convoluted answer?

Without question, Sega GT is a little bit humbled by the sheer, nearly encyclopedic scope of Gran Turismo 2, but it is not embarrassed by it. There are plenty of vehicles in Sega's offering from the likes of Toyota, Honda, Daihatsu, Nissan, Mitsubishi, Subaru, and Audi (new for the U.S. version), in addition to the custom Carozzeria mode, where you can create wholly original cars from the drivetrain up. Still, car freaks who get off on Gran Turismo's ridiculous cache of vehicles and bonus rally modes are likely to be disappointed by Sega GT. The rest, however, will find more than enough to choose from here.

Where Sega GT has it all over Gran Turismo, and this is no surprise, is its graphics. True, the game doesn't sparkle like Yu Suzuki's Ferrari F355, nor does it run at 60 frames per second, but within the confines of its rock-steady 30 fps engine, Sega GT puts on an accomplished show. The track scenery is wonderfully designed, the car models are good, there's a great sense of atmosphere on some of the courses, and the virtual lack of pop-up imparts an air of bulletproof solidity to the visual pre-





Sega's incredibly solid Gran Turismo fighter is a great DC racer, combining accomplished visuals with great physics

sentation that makes it difficult to look at Gran Turismo. Of course, the Dreamcast has a huge advantage here, but as both experiences exist, it's impossible not to compare the two.

The same goes for the two games' physics models. I've said this before, but Sega GT just feels more "alive" in its control responses than Gran Turismo. It's a very subtle thing that probably has more to do with the extra processing power of the Dreamcast rather than a true difference in philosophy on the part of the developers. Both games are phenomenal in this respect, however, and choosing one over the other is really mostly a matter of preference, with the point being that Sega GT gives up nothing to Gran Turismo in driving pleasure.

Nor does Sega GT lose face with its replayability, offering up tons of racing challenges requiring specific car types, various engine displacements, different drive configurations, and races involving vehicles created in Carozzeria mode. So there are plenty of reasons to play the game extensively, using race winnings to upgrade and purchase new cars outright. This is in addition to the tough-as-nails A-level license challenges, which involve achieving a perfect single lap in order to open up race versions of some of the cars in the game. This is incredibly difficult, and shaving off tenths of a second in search of that one perfect run is maddening and addictive.

Existing in a vacuum, Sega GT would probably feel a little more special than it does currently, what with Gran Turismos lurking about in the millions. But it holds its own in no uncertain terms, and Dreamcast owners hungry for a bit of the old car-sim will be very happy with this game. It doesn't do anything wrong, but then again, it also can't claim one ounce of originality for itself outside of the Carozzeria mode. I can live with that. GR

- ROBUST, GLITCH-FREE 30 FPS ENGINE
- FANTASTIC PHYSICS MODEL
- SIMPLE BUT VERY SATISFYING COURSE DESIGN
- GOOD SELECTION OF CARS AUGMENTED BY CAROZZERIA MODE

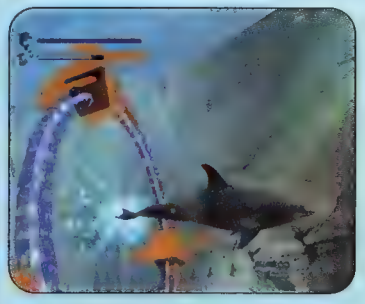
REPUBLIC SAYS... SEGA GT IS A VERY GOOD ATTEMPT AT SNATCHING AWAY SOME OF THE GRAN TURISMO FAITHFUL FROM THE PLAYSTATION. IT LOOKS GREAT, AND PLAYS EVEN BETTER.

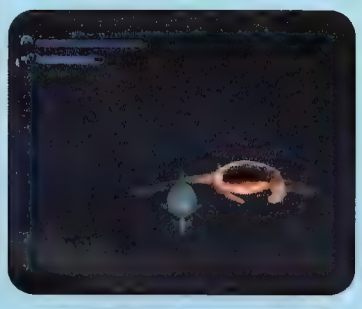
B+

ECCO THE DOLPHIN
DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

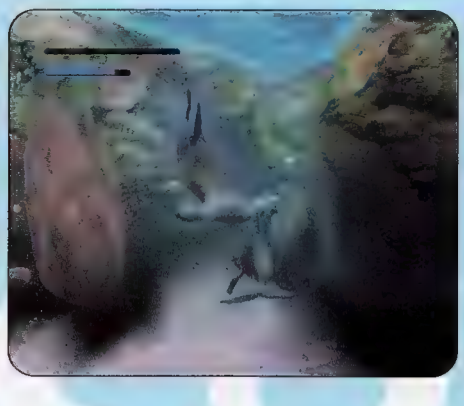
Deep under the Dreamcast sea, join forces with a beautiful dolphin and settle in for a unique, truly special gaming experience

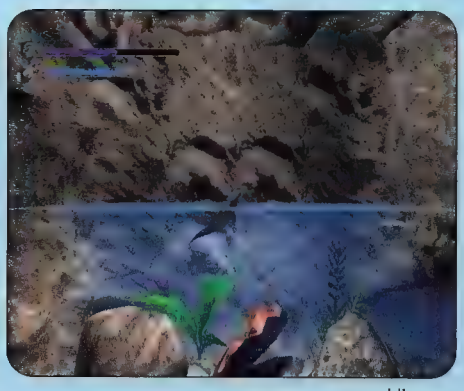


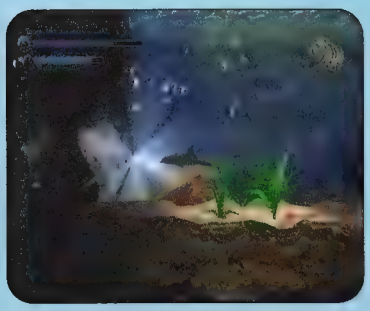


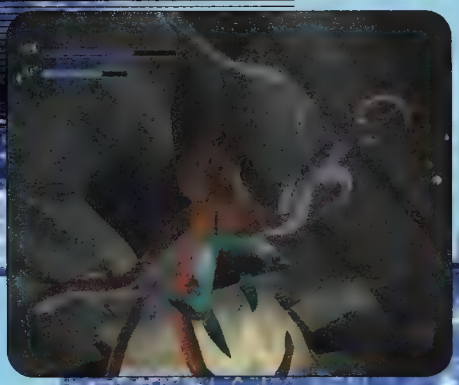
Appaloosa has made a habit of swimming in dangerous waters. Having been brave enough to take on the development of the first non-Japanese Contra—a lofty task to say the least, during which the game would also be yanked from its 2D roots—they did an admirable enough job, but consumers and press alike, eager to club it to death in protest, pummeled it with a vengeance. Like the forthcoming Terminator sans Cameron, fans can and will be doubly cruel whenever a major license changes hands and falls even a little bit short. While Ecco and Ecco 2 for the Genesis may not hold a candle to the Contra franchise, the game has a major hardcore Sega following who have waited patiently to swim once more, and Sega can ill afford to rock that boat. Fortunately for everyone involved, Appaloosa has delivered their finest game to date by not only creating a formidable sequel, but actually improving on the original formula while bringing the game into a stunning 3D universe. Considering the game's surreal overtones, vivid topographic worlds, and underwater physics, this must have been hard to fathom to say the least, and, having played my share of Dreamcast, I can attest to the team's stalwart efforts.

The trick was in maintaining the game's otherworldly guise while making it fun but, at the same time, keeping it from looking like something aimed squarely at the Discovery Channel demographic or worse, new-age freakazoids. Appaloosa has accomplished this by making Ecco, first and foremost, one hell of an involved video game, standing as the most sinisterly adventurous title I've ever played. It will twist your mind in knots. To successfully traverse these waters takes a certain measure of talent, the right frame of mind and, most importantly, patience, and lots of it. Your reasoning skills together with your concentration and reflexes will









be tested like never before. The game presents a series of riddles (seemingly written by Yoda) from which you must first derive exactly what the goal is (which is often a challenge in itself) and then set out to achieve it. Ecco moves through the massive network of tunnels, pools, and passageways by learning different techniques and interacting with the creatures of the sea, so the game presents non-stop puzzles and task-based missions that take several passes to fully understand, let alone complete. And everything is linked, so if you have a bad memory, good luck. This is a constant journey of discovery, a deep, hyper-involved action-role-playing game in every sense. Because of its overwhelming complexity, if it were anything less than magical to see, hear and play, I'd have nothing to do with it.

Which brings me to the game's stunning graphics. Standing as one of the most beautiful games ever made, Ecco is drenched in breathtaking visuals. The models are unprecedented from the smallest fish to the largest whale and the environments

CONTINUED ON PAGE 116 ▸

- BRING YOUR SKILL, CUNNING, AND PATIENCE
- A TRULY UNIQUE & IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE
- THIS GAME MAY ACTUALLY ENRICH YOUR LIFE
- YOU MAY NEVER EAT TUNA AGAIN

REPUBLIC SAYS...

ALTHOUGH FRUSTRATION CAN SET IN DUE TO ECCO'S UNIQUE UNIVERSE AND SCENARIOS, IT'S WELL WORTH THE INVESTMENT, AS THE PAY OFF IS TRULY WONDROUS.

A-

• developer yukes • publisher thq • available now

WWF ROYAL RUMBLE

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Finally, THQ has brought the WWF back to the Dreamcast with wild arcade action and an unprecedented nine characters in the ring at once

WWF Royal Rumble is based on a Sega coin-op game, and it shows. You can tell it was made to be played for a quick fix of wrestling mania and wasn't really designed to be played for the long haul. I can't deny that the manic action of Royal Rumble is electrifying. With an awesome nine characters on-screen at once, the sheer number of polygons is extremely impressive, and the action moves at a shockingly fast pace. Yeah, the poly count per character suffers a bit (they have twig-like arms and lack muscle definition), but the models are still pretty darn sweet, thanks to the power of the Dreamcast. The textures are pretty sharp as well, except for a few character faces that just look plain wrong. But when you're in the heat of a four-player, 60-man over-the-top Royal Rumble match, you'll hardly have time to plan your next move, let alone worry about textures.

The problem with Royal Rumble is that it offers very little beyond its instant-gratification action, and even that has flaws. While most grappling games are filled to the hilt with play modes and characters, Royal Rumble only has the Royal Rumble and exhibition mode (which is actually a 10-tier tournament), along with a versus mode. No survivor mode, no customization options, not even a tag team mode. Another problem is the presentation. There aren't any real ring entrances to speak of, authentic theme songs are limited to 15-second snippets, no wrestler voices are included and there isn't any commentary, which just shouldn't be the case on a system like Dreamcast. Added to this are numerous gameplay quirks, like no auto-facing your opponent and no control config option. To Yuke's' credit, there are some very cool-looking moves and the backstage brawling is great, but it really isn't enough to make this game worth a purchase. Maybe there's a contingent of wrestling fans who will appreciate WWF Royal Rumble's arcade mentality, but the game is just so shallow. GR

- UNPRECEDENTED NINE CHARACTERS IN THE RING
- WILD ACTION WITH GOOD GRAPHICS
- DULL PRESENTATION
- SEVERE LACK OF PLAY MODES

REPUBLICSAYS... NICE GRAPHICS AND WILD NINE-MAN ACTION, BUT NO DEPTH OR REPLAY VALUE. RENT IT WITH THREE OF YOUR FRIENDS.

C+

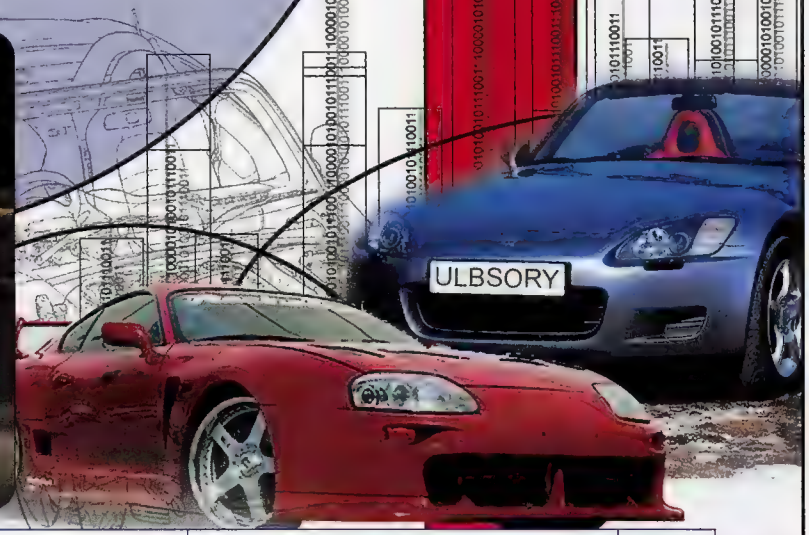
TOKYO XTREME RACER 2

BY MIKE HOBBS

The original Tokyo Xtreme thrilled gamers with its good looks, high speeds, and intense competition. The very same holds true for the sequel, a much larger game, but one that makes no attempt whatsoever to tinker with the formula that worked so well the first time around.

And just what is the formula? Basically, the game is nothing but a series of one-on-one street races through darkened Tokyo highways as you challenge roaming rival cars with a flash of your headlights and then deplete their fighting-game-like power meters by staying ahead of them. This is not easy against the faster and more accomplished rivals, as you've got to keep one eye behind and one eye ahead for slow-moving traffic and upcoming corners. During these moments, the game works brilliantly, offering up an amazing sensation of speed and a great feeling of tension as you struggle to hold your position. And the rewards for winning allow you to buy new rides or to tweak out your existing car with cool-looking aero bits and performance enhancers. But during the moments when you're just driving around the expressways looking for rivals, the game is a snore, the only cure being to exit out of the game and start a new day of racing, when rivals are more closely grouped to your starting position. This aspect of the game is the most unfortunate, and it would have been a seemingly simple fix for developers Genki to just artificially put more rivals out there on the course, so that as one challenge ended, another would be ready to go straightaway. And it would have helped a little if the game wasn't quite so stingy with the prize money, so that after you exit the track in bored frustration, you could least enjoy blowing wads of cash on new cars or upgrades.

These complaints aside, Xtreme 2 is a very exciting and very good-looking game, and while it doesn't really eclipse the first Xtreme in terms of its absolute pleasure factor, it wasn't really expected to; the concept was pretty well explored the first time around. **GR**



128-Neg gamers' republic

- LIKE THE FIRST, A GREAT-LOOKING GAME
- FAR MORE ROADWAY TO EXPLORE THIS TIME AROUND
- HIGHLY CHARGED AND INTENSE COMPETITION
- THE GAME CAN BE SLOW GOING SOMETIMES

REPUBLIC SAYS... TOKYO XTREME 2 IS A COMPLETELY STRAIGHTFORWARD SEQUEL, OFFERING UP NEW CARS AND GREATER TRACK LENGTH, BUT IT PLAYS EXACTLY LIKE THE FIRST.

B

SPIDER-MAN

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Doing whatever a spider can, Spider-Man spins an awesome web of comic-book action on PlayStation

Spider-Man has swung his way to the PlayStation in style! Far from just another licensed game, Activision and Neversoft have taken the web-spinning, wall-crawling antics of one of the world's most recognizable comic book heroes and turned them into one proud action-adventure.

Everything that made Spidey famous is featured in the game. Spider-Man can crawl along virtually any surface, he can swing through the skies on his webbing, and he beats up the villains in exaggerated smack-bam comic-book style, right down to climbing on their backs and bashing the baddies in the noggin. Alternative to fisticuffs, Spider-Man can use his trademark web attacks, such as high-impact web shots or simply tangling them up. Complimenting Spidey's moves, the game has a great comic-book story and features some of his most famous friends and foes, including Carnage, Mysterio, Doc Ock, Human Torch and the Punisher. Even the dialogue is right. You gotta laugh when Venom jokes about "surfing the web."

All the authentic comic influence in the world don't mean squat if the gameplay isn't there, though. Fortunately that's not a problem. By incorporating a variety of levels, the designers have insured that the game constantly stays interesting. Whether swinging through the city, chasing after a super-villain, exploring a sewer, avoiding enemy fire while scaling a building, or just engaging in all-out beat-'em-up action, Spider-Man never stops being fun. It never stops looking good, either. Using a modified Tony Hawk's Pro Skater graphics engine, Spider-Man has large levels, excellent animation and good-looking character models (although some facial textures are ugly). For the most part, Spider-Man controls well also, so using Spidey's super-powers quickly becomes second nature. The only quirks are that you can't rotate your character or fully control the camera, and sometimes movement gets funky when Spidey is crawling upside-down and backwards, but you'll adjust to the minor awkwardness pretty quickly.

Beyond the wealth of gameplay, Spider-Man has plenty of nifty extras for fans. Bonus costumes and comic covers are there for the finding, and even the classic Spider-Man theme song is featured! But that's just fluff. It doesn't matter if you're a Peter Parker junkie or not; Spider-Man is a great game and one of the best action-adventures I've played in a long time. GR

- ALL OF SPIDEY'S POWERS REPRESENTED
- VARIETY OF FUN LEVELS
- GREAT COMIC-BOOK PRESENTATION
- LOOKS AND SOUNDS GOOD

REPUBLIC SAYS... GREAT COMIC-BOOK PRESENTATION AND GREAT GAMEPLAY. IF ONLY ALL LICENSED GAMES WERE THIS GOOD.

A-

VALKYRIE PROFILE

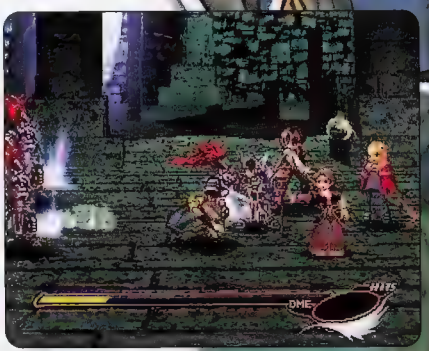
BY MIKE HOBBS

Enix and Tri-Ace bring 2D beauty to the PlayStation one last time in this innovative and enjoyable adventure/RPG

As it feels that the art of 2D is currently gasping for air, it's not without a sense of gratitude when a game like Valkyrie Profile comes along. 2D need not die, but it seems that as more new gamers enter the scene, all things non-polygonal are immediately dismissed out of hand. This is a shame, because there are still things that can be done, certain moods and aesthetic considerations that can be accomplished, that simply cannot be achieved with polygons, at least not yet.

Apart from its obvious visual signature, Valkyrie Profile is thankfully an interesting and original game, well up to the task of giving substance to the style. At its heart, this is a dungeon exploration/combat RPG, but what drives the action is the great Norse concept wherein you are recruiting and training fallen heroes for the mythical battle of Ragnarok. As you are introduced to the game's myriad participants through cute but dramatic story scenes, you are granted access to an ever-changing arsenal of combatants, building them up with the addictive battle system throughout the well- drawn, parallax-laden 2D dungeons. Then at the end of each of the game's chapters, you offer up your strongest warriors to aid the Aesir army in its battle with the Vanir. And you can track the progress of your donated souls, checking in on their accomplishments during the chapter breaks, giving the game an added sense of continuity and helping to quell slightly the rigidity of its episodic structure.

Now, except for a few flashy effects and the obvious polygonal work, Valkyrie Profile feels and looks like a high-powered 16-bit title, but for a particular generation of gamer, this is indeed high praise. And regardless of what strikes your fancy, there is no denying the attractiveness of this game, with its rich, 2D backdrops, fantastic score, and innovative and fun battle system. GR



- BEAUTIFUL 2D BACKDROPS AND SPRITES
- FANTASTICALLY ADDICTIVE BATTLE SYSTEM
- INSPIRING MUSICAL SCORE
- AMERICAN VOICE ACTING NOT QUITE UP TO SNUFF

REPUBLIC SAYS... VALKYRIE PROFILE REMINDS US THAT A MODERN GAME NEED NOT BE POLYGONAL TO BE VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE, WHILE ITS GAMEPLAY LIVES UP TO THE PROMISE OF ITS GRAPHICS.

B+

TENCHU 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Unsheathe your sword and return to the world of the ninja.

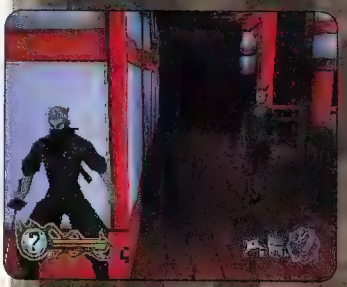
The stealth assassins are back and as deadly as ever

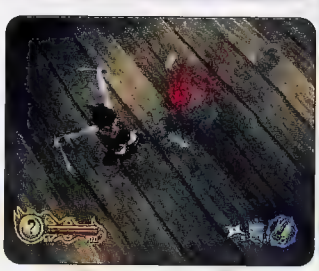
The way of the ninja is not an easy one. It requires strength, perseverance, discipline, good graphics, atmosphere, precise control, a balance of stealth and fighting. Activision's Tenchu 2: Birth of the Stealth Assassins succeeds with skill and honor in many of these regards, but in others...let's just say more time in the dojo was necessary.

Tenchu 2 is one of those games that I really wanted to enjoy. Just like in the prequel, the entire stealth aspect is extremely appealing. The satisfaction of sneaking through an area unseen and the thrill of silently slitting an enemy warrior's throat are fantastic. Coupled with a diverse selection of realistic items and weapons, a great feudal Japan setting and very nice ambient sounds, Tenchu 2 does a great job recreating the world of the ninja.

Well, the world of the nearsighted ninja anyway. One of Tenchu 2's biggest flaws is its poor draw distance. The two ninja characters, Rikimaru and Ayame, can only see a few dozen feet in front of themselves before the Japanese landscapes disappear into darkness or a mysterious fog. True, the draw-in problem is probably due to the vast environments—they're much bigger than in the original—but in a game where you constantly need to see what and who is around you, this flaw isn't just ugly, it's a gameplay hindrance. Other graphic problems also abound: character models are badly done, texture warping is rampant, and the cheesy water effect (white pixels are the only indication of the water's surface) is the worst I've yet seen. Additionally, the voice acting is laughable and the controls just aren't adequate for close-quarters combat (an enemy lock-on function would have made boss battles much more playable).

On the plus side, the control is still better than it was in the original, and the inclusion of 20 levels is appreciated. An extensive custom level editor is even featured for would-be game designers. It's just too bad you'll need to look past the game's many flaws to enjoy everything else. GR





- GREAT BLEND OF STEALTH AND ACTION
- LARGE ATMOSPHERIC ENVIRONMENTS

- POOR DRAW DISTANCE AND CHARACTER MODELS
- LAUGHABLE VOICE ACTING

REPUBLIC SAYS... A GOOD MIX OF STEALTH, ACTION AND ATMOSPHERE, DRAGGED DOWN BY SHABBY GRAPHICS AND MANY OTHER FLAWS.

C+

Mario Golf was great, but can Camelot work their magic again for tennis? Are you kidding? This is Nintendo we're talking about

MARIO TENNIS

BY MIKE HOBBS

We all knew that Mario Tennis 64 would be great. After Camelot's sterling work on Mario Golf, it was obvious that they had the talent and mindset to create a game worthy of the Mario signature.

The key is simplicity, as it is with all successful Nintendo games. In Mario Tennis, all the various strokes available to each character are performed using only two buttons, making the game easy to play immediately. But true to form, Mario Tennis manages to become more and more satisfying over time as its subtle sophistication reveals itself; a lot is accomplished with only two buttons.

And like Mario Golf, Tennis is replete with hugely addictive play modes. There are numerous ring challenges, and a wild stage where items like turtle shells and bananas can be collected and fired off Mario Kart-style. And, of course, there is the classic fun of the straight singles and doubles matches. What a treat it is to see a screen filled with four classic Nintendo characters, all running around diving for balls, smashing at the net, and emitting the cutest little grunts.

Which brings me to the next great thing about Mario Tennis: the sound. It brings so much to the game and it's perfectly done, from the tiny report of the ball hitting the racket to the numerous voice clips for the characters, all so true to the flavor of the Mario universe.

Games like this are why Nintendo will always be loved. There's just such immense satisfaction to be had here, such a delightful feeling that pervades everything about Mario Tennis 64. It is the equal of the brilliant Mario Golf, and in one way, it's even better, for the simple reason that the pace of the game is obviously much higher. Yes, Nintendo and Camelot have come through yet again. **GR**

- PERFECT CONTROL SYSTEM MAKES IT A DELIGHT TO PLAY
- OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD TWO- AND FOUR-PLAYER FUN
- PERPETUALLY PLEASING MARIO UNIVERSE
- BRILLIANT SOUND DESIGN

REPUBLICSAYS... NINTENDO GAMES ARE SUCH A GREAT PART OF LIFE, AND THE CAMELOT-DEVELOPED MARIO TENNIS 64 IS NO EXCEPTION TO THIS RULE. I DEFY ANYONE NOT TO ENJOY THIS GAME.

A-

0 31441 07950

GUNBIRD 2

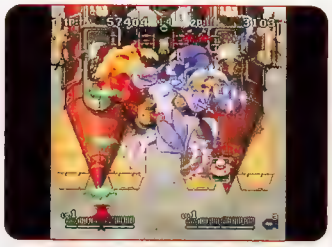
review by m. hobbs • dev: psikyo • pub: capcom • avail: now

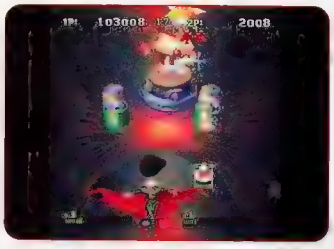
C+

One has to respect the single-minded focus of a company like Psikyo. They make nothing but shooters, and they're good at it. This month's cover story, Cannon Spike, was developed by Psikyo for Capcom, as was this game, Gunbird 2. A pure, arcade-bred overhead 2D shooter, Gunbird 2 is short, intense, and fun. That is, if you can stomach an unabashedly old-school shooter, as I still can.

Gunbird 2 plays and looks like other Psikyo shooters like Strikers 1945, offering up a selection of different characters, each with a specific, screen-clearing bomb and special attack. And thanks to Psikyo's connection with Capcom, Morrigan of Darkstalkers is one of the selectable characters.

Just keep in mind when considering Gunbird 2 that there is nothing new here, just the sort of non-stop mindless action present in arcade shooters of the past. And also remember that this is an incredibly short game, originally designed to suck quarters for about 15 minutes. GR





ACTION BASS

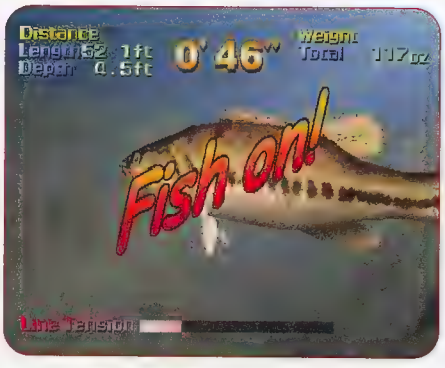
review by m. puccini • dev: syscom ent. • pub: take-two • avail: now

PlayStation D+

The main school of thought when discussing Action Bass fishing and its budget, $9.99 price tag is that you get what you pay for. You have to think that in exchange for one crisp Hamilton, you are just going to get a basic game (that probably only took a few months to create) with simplistic features and controls and not much, if any, production value. And you're right. I finished Action Bass in a day.

A bass fishing engine really can't be too varied; you have a boat, fishing poles, lures, water and fish. The two highlights of Action Bass (a definite oxymoron) are that the fish models are actually quite nice and that you can keep the fish that you catch in Free Mode and watch them swimming in an aquarium (if you're into that sort of thing).

I'd say that this should be relegated to a rental, but the typical rental price is half of the price of the game itself. (And if you're like the rest of the country and forget to return it on time and incur the late fees....) GR

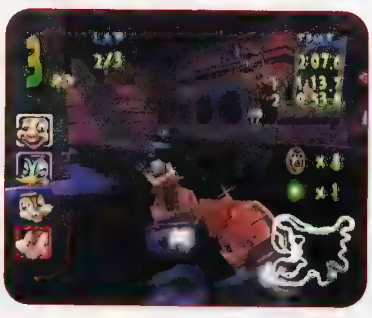


DISNEY WORLD QUEST: MAGICAL RACING TOUR

review by c. hoffman • dev: crystal dynamics • pub: eidos • avail: now

C

I'm thinking that Eidos should just start up a new division called "No Frills DC Ports." We've suffered through cheap conversions of games like Tomb Raider since the Dreamcast was introduced, and Walt Disney World Quest: Magical Racing Tour is continuing the trend. Hardly anything has changed from the PlayStation version. The courses, the character models, the textures, the frame rate—everything seems ported over to the DC without any effort or thought to the DC's capabilities. Okay, so maybe there's some slightly better shading and cleaner visuals, and the versus mode has been upped to support four players, but if it weren't for the DC controller in my hand, I wouldn't know that's what system I was playing. That said, MRT offers moderately fun fast-paced action that younger players will probably enjoy. The courses are all based on the Walt Disney World theme park, with levels like Pirates of the Caribbean and Space Mountain and, to the designers' credit, they capture the look, feel and sound (be sure to mute that gospel rendition of "Zip-A-Dee-Do-Dah") of the real rides admirably. Additionally, the tracks are well-designed—useful short cuts and power-ups are everywhere—and the control is amazingly responsive. But the magic stops there. MRT lacks play modes (there's no grand prix mode, just adventure, time trials and versus), the enemy AI is cheap, and the cast has to include the most idiotic characters Disney ever created (not that it's Eidos' fault; Rare and Nintendo have the good ones under contract). Too bad they didn't just port the good parts from the PS version and leave the bad stuff behind. GR



オールフォーマット レビュー
Lic No. AA7681841-00

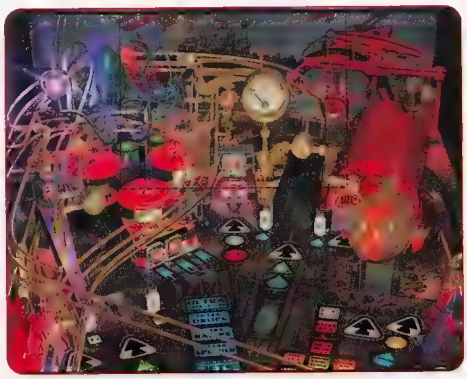
PRO PINBALL: FANTASTIC JOURNEY

review by m. puccini • dev: cunning developments • pub: empire interactive • avail: now

PlayStation C+

Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey is a good pinball simulation. The lights, sounds, table layout and physics of a real pinball machine are all nicely re-created. There are multi-balls, a dot-matrix shooter mini-game, a couple over-the-table-top tunnels, nudge buttons, tilting and a soundtrack that changes with the events taking place on the machine. You can even pretend you're a pinball machine owner/repairman and access menus that let you manage the machine: test the parts, set the number of balls per game, set the free game score, check how many games have been played, etc.

Unfortunately, the whole beauty and magic of playing a real game of pinball is the oneness you attain with the machine, the style you use to master it. This kinetic feeling is lost when the experience is transferred to a video game. Plus, the ultimate objective of playing pinball is to win free games, which is pointless here...they're all free. GR



PRO PINBALL: BIG RACE U.S.A.

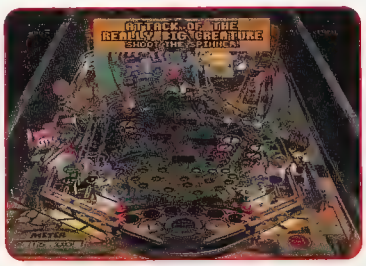
review by m. puccini • dev: cunning developments • pub: empire interactive • avail: now

PlayStation B-

I was quite skeptical when I received Pro Pinball: Big Race U.S.A., having come to the conclusion after first playing Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey that pinball is best played in an arcade for the truly innate pinball experience.

But PPBRUSA works for what it is—a pinball simulation. And adding to the visual sensation of the light show layout of this board is a dot-matrix window at the top of the screen providing video clips of the voice sound bites calling out the special happenings. Once activated, there's also a mini-driving game on the dot-matrix screen. Also, unlike PPFJ, what adds a little flavor to this table is the use of four flippers—two on top and two at the bottom.

Granted, it does get old after a while, but, like the real thing, it's fun to play every now and then. GR



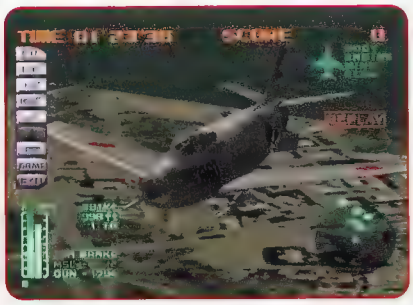
AERO WINGS 2

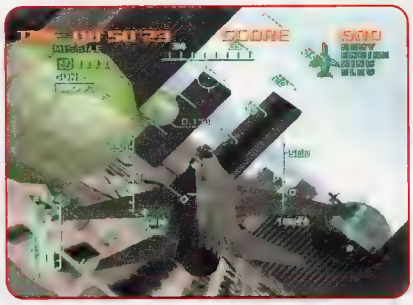
review by m. hobbs • dev: cri • pub: crave • avail: now

C+

CRI bit the bullet with Aero Wings 2, offering up what many wished for in the first game—shooting action. Now, before you get it into your head that this is some kind of Ace Combat-style mission-based shooter, be aware that this is still a game rooted firmly in Aero Wings convention, being a slow-moving, abstract sort of thing. The shooting aspect of the game is nothing more than basic dogfighting and balloon-blasting trials. This, of course, joins the sort of tactical challenges that drove most people nuts in the first game, beginning with learning the basics of flight, and continuing on to more advanced maneuvers.

I really enjoyed the original Aero Wings for the simple reason that it was so unique. How many other formation flying simulators are there for console? But as Aero Wings 2 attempts to be more broad in its appeal, by offering up some tepid shooting action, it has lost its originality, and consequently, it has lost its esoteric appeal. GR





GAMES MOBILIZED

PORTABLE GAMING ANALYSIS

KOF: BATTLE DE PARADISE

dev/pub: snk · avail: now (japan)
reviewed by c. hoffman

B

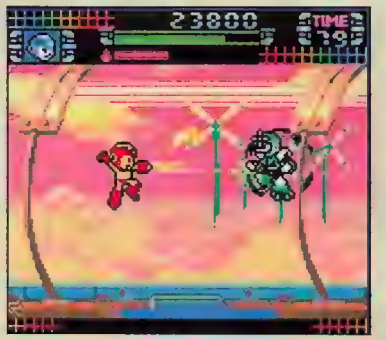
The King of Fighters tournament continues...as a board game!? Yep, it's true. Much like Mario Party, King of Fighters Battle de Paradise grabs some of your favorite characters from their usual games and plunks them into a fun, simple title filled with numerous mini-games. The biggest draw in Battle de Paradise is the inclusion of all the popular characters. Characters like Kyo, Goro Daimon and Billy Kane are selected as "striker" partners that determine how much of an edge you have in mini-games, and other favorites, from Mai Shiranui to Iori, show up in some form or another. Though the 23 mini-games are fun and varied (they include everything from a button-mashing 100-meter dash to a memory tile game) and there's a decent selection of boards, games of this type are innately better on consoles (especially with four-player capability). Still, it's cute and fun for what it is. **GR**

ROCKMAN BATTLE & FIGHTERS

dev/pub: capcom · avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

C-

You would think Rockman (aka Mega Man) and the Neo Geo Pocket would be a perfect match. Great 2D series, great 2D system. Sadly that isn't the case with Rockman Battle & Fighters. As a port of the fighting-style Rockman arcade games, B&F offers none of the classic side-scrolling action the series is known for—it's just boss battles. On top of that, you have infinite continues so you can beat the game on your first try in less than 10 minutes (or 25 minutes when blindfolded; no joke, we tried it). Even the music is dull and repetitive, which is especially disappointing considering the wealth of snappy tunes in the coin-ops. Sure, the animation is good and there are plenty of bosses, but what's the point if the game has no replay value? I'm bummed that the NGP dropped out of the U.S. market, but I'll consider it a good thing that this game isn't coming out here. **GR**



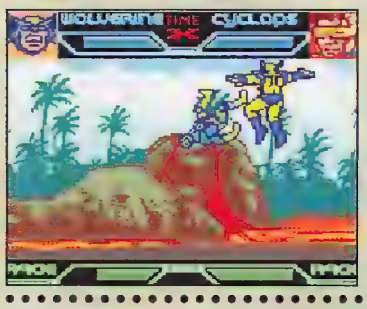
X-MEN: MUTANT ACADEMY

GAME BOY COLOR

dev: crawfish interactive · pub: activision · avail: now
reviewed by c. hoffman

D

X-Men: Mutant Academy was a good fighter on PlayStation, but this Game Boy version is anything but. The graphics are fairly nice and there are 11 characters to choose from (including Pyro and Apocalypse, exclusive to this version), but the game is just horrible to play. The main problem lies in the controls. They just aren't responsive enough to pull off special moves with any reliability. Not that you'll really need the special moves; most of them are rather weak and useless (and there are only two per character). The computer opponents, even on the hardest setting, can be trashed with a simple button-mashing flurry of unrelenting punches anyway. If you want a Game Boy fighting game, go for Street Fighter Alpha, or better yet, scrounge up a Neo Geo Pocket. **GR**

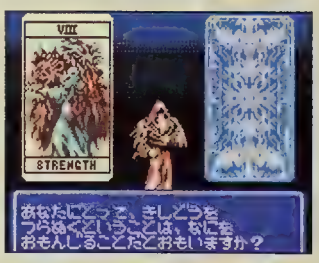


OGRE BATTLE

dev/pub: snk · avail: now (japan)
reviewed by c. hoffman

B

The classic strategy game Ogre Battle has been shrunk down and ported to the Neo Geo Pocket, and it's survived the transition rather well. Just like in the console versions, Ogre Battle is filled with strategic combat and RPG elements, such as maintaining your popularity among your citizens. There's lots of micromanagement: balancing your numerous battle parties, keeping your troops well-equipped, dealing with several types of character classes, and playing your tarot cards. The graphics come off pretty slick too. The overworld map is merely adequate, but the battles look very nice and the game is loaded with well-drawn portraits. Another plus is the quick-save that lets you take a break at any time. If you liked Ogre Battle's warfare-oriented gameplay before, then you'll like this version also. Be warned though: if you don't know Japanese or haven't spent extensive time with other versions of Ogre Battle, you'll probably have a hard time stumbling through. **GR**

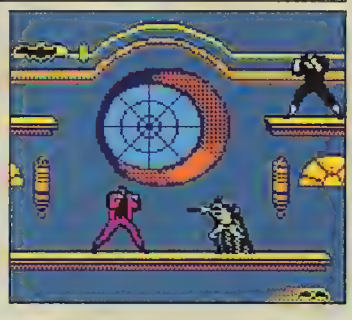


BATMAN CHAOS

GAME BOY COLOR

dev/pub: ubi soft · avail: fall 2000
previewed by c. hoffman

The Caped Crusader is making the Game Boy safe once again as he returns in the side-scrolling action title, Batman Chaos. Batman, along with his allies Robin and Batgirl, punches and jumps his way through numerous levels of Gotham City, including the criminal-infested streets and toxic factories. Naturally, the full complement of gadgets is available (including the Batarang) and players can even take control of the Batmobile or hit the skies in Batman's flying suit. **GR**



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GAME BOY COLOR

E Mild Animated Violence

One of the first great video-game company slogans I ever heard and remembered was from Electronic Arts: "If It's In The Game, It's In The Game!" The reason why it was so memorable was because it was not only catchy but also true. Unquestionably, Electronic Arts is the top name in sports video games, if not the top third-party software licensee in all of gaming. Take the Madden franchise for instance. Since its debut as John Madden Football on the Sega Genesis back in 1991, the company's number one U.S. franchise has appeared on 12 different gaming systems, including 3DO, Game Gear, Macintosh and Saturn. (FIFA, the company's number one worldwide title, has also been released for 12 different systems.)

Over the past decade, Electronic Arts, based in Redwood City, CA, became so successful with their sports franchises that they created a separate brand, aptly called EA Sports, as their titles have now become synonymous with the company: Madden, FIFA, NBA Live, Triple Play. And the company has a gold mine with the rights to the sporting world's newest living legend, Tiger Woods.

With such a dominant grip on the sports game market, it's no wonder that at this year's E3 show Sony bypassed its own 989 Sports studio and granted EA "most-favored nation status" by exclusively giving them 10 -15 minutes out of the huge PS2 unveiling press conference to showcase some of the developer's PS2 titles. And what a lineup it is!

Over the next 12 months, EA Sports is planning an all-out assault on the sports gaming front: Madden NFL 2001 (PS2, PS, N64), FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer (PS2, PS), NHL 2001 (PS2, PS), NBA Live 2001 (PS2, PS), SSX Snowboarding (PS2), NASCAR 2001 (PS2), Knockout Kings 2001 (PS2, PS), Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001 (PS2), Swing Away Golf (PS2, PS) and F1 Championship Season 2000 (PS2, PS).

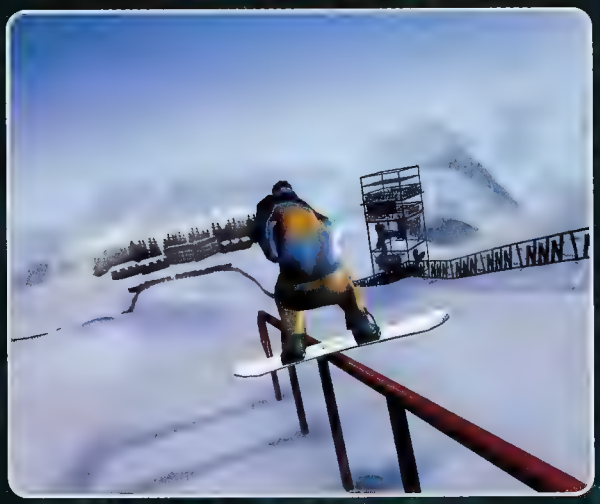
EA has essentially made its reputation by building great sports engines and then enhancing them each year as technology allows. But the company wouldn't be where it is today if the games didn't play great to begin with. After all, if it's in the game, "It's In The Game." GR

gamers' republic sports

EA SPORTS SPECIAL

by: m. puccini developer: ea pub: ea available: various

ESPN the games

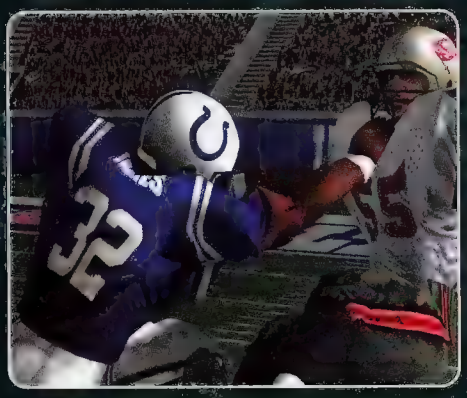


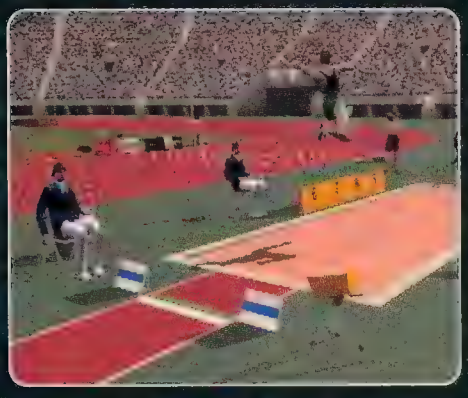
When one thinks of the leader in sports television, ESPN unquestionably comes to mind, but when one thinks of sports video games, ESPN does not. Likewise, when one thinks of the top developers/publishers of video games, Konami is a constant. But when one thinks of sports video games, Konami isn't really considered a contender.

So a marriage between Konami and ESPN would seem to help both gain prominence in the sports video-game genre—at least that's what both of them are hoping. The companies are going to try and knock EA off of the sports video-game throne with the creation of the ESPN The Games line of sports titles, combining Konami's gaming experience and expertise with ESPN's sports lineage, knowledge, style and personalities.

Covering all of the major sports, the powerful opening salvo in Konami/ESPN's arsenal is aimed squarely at EA's jugular: ESPN NFL Primetime (PS2), ESPN Baseball Tonight (DC), ESPN NBA 2Night (PS2, DC, GBC), ESPN MLS GameNight (PS), ESPN X Games Snowboarding (PS2), ESPN International Track & Field (PS2, DC), and ESPN Great Outdoor Games: Bass Fishing (PS).

In addition to the gaming talents at Konami and the exclusive use of the ESPN broadcast personalities (including Chris "Give Me A Nickname" Berman, Joe Morgan and Brent Musberger), the companies have signed some big-name talent to promote the new games: San Francisco Giants slugger Barry Bonds for Baseball Tonight, Miami Heat center Alonzo "Zo" Mourning for NBA 2Night, Olympic hopeful and current 100-meter world-record-holder sprinter Maurice Greene for International Track & Field, professional snowboarder Peter Line for X Games-Snowboarding, and Tampa Bay Mutiny midfielder Carlos Valderrama for MLS GameNight.



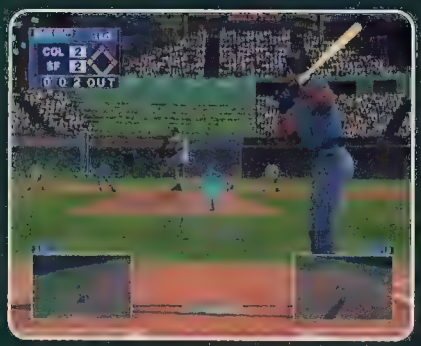


All in all, Konami/ESPN's ESPN The Games initial lineup is quite well-rounded and impressive. We've already given high marks to the smooth MLS GameNight, and are currently being dazzled by the fine combination of graphics and gameplay in the International Track & Field PS2 title. If the same combination pervades each of the Konami/ESPN offerings, then the sports genre is about to get a lot more competitive as EA gets some hard competition from the combination of a company that knows sports better than anyone else in the world and a gaming giant that is as old as the industry itself. GR

gamers' republic sports

KONAMI/ESPN SPORTS SPECIAL

by: m. puccini developer: konami pub: konami available: various



I thought that World Series Baseball 2K1 would be to baseball fans what NFL2K and NBA2K were to football and basketball fans. And graphically, it is. Let's get this out of the way upfront—this is the best looking, most realistic console baseball game there has ever been. The stadiums are intricately detailed, the player animations and the facial maps are superb and, on the close-ups, the players smile and blink and blow bubbles with their gum.

But filled with poor AI routines and CPU-controlled fielding, the gameplay is another story. It's just not very much fun if you can't control the outfielders and the game becomes frustrating when the CPU makes horrendous plays on your behalf. Here's an example of what happened to me on nearly back-to-back-to-back plays: on a grounder to short, the shortstop ran to the ball and then suddenly stopped and let it go by; the center fielder waited forever to move forward for a fly ball that ended up dropping in; and, on a ball hit deep to nearly dead center field, the right fielder ran over to get the ball because the center fielder started running to left field! To end up losing a game because of the AI is sad and all desire to want to play a full season of this game is lost.

Despite the game's many flaws, you have to maintain faith that Sega will link this gorgeous graphics engine with the kind of superb gameplay the series has enjoyed in the past. (And I'd hate to see one of the best Create-A-Player options I've seen waisted again). World Series Baseball has great genes, going back to the Genesis, so this gives Sega Sports something to work on for WSBB2K2. GR

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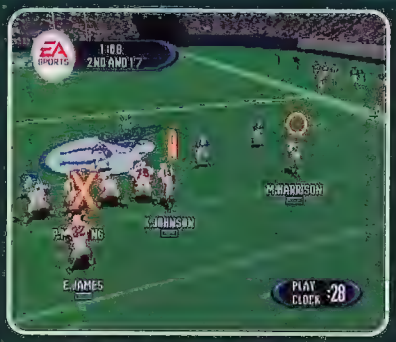
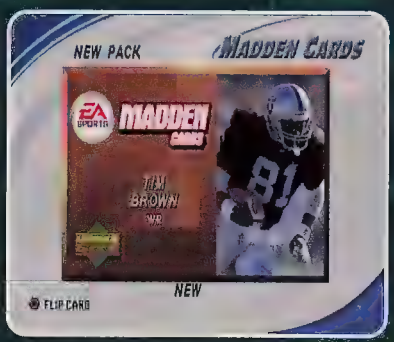
WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K1

by: m. puccini developer: sega pub: sega available: now





It's such a treat to play a football game as complete and deep as Madden NFL 2001. There's new polish and enhancements added to last year's engine—stylish menus and screens, the addition of real NFL coaches voices, new collision physics and an excellent, multiplayer party game called Two Minute Drill. But the reason why I can't put the game down is the addition of an innovative feature called Madden Cards. Madden Cards are essentially Upper Deck-brand electronic football cards that you purchase with tokens gained by completing any of the 100 different tasks in any of the single-player mode games (except Situation). There are easy tasks—like sack the QB, or intercept at least one pass—and there are tougher tasks—like complete 20 consecutive passes, or score 85 points with six minute quarters.

There are 300 different cards to collect—150 are of current NFL players, 50 are of retired superstars (no, there's no O.J. Simpson card...damn it) and 100 are bonus cards of hidden teams, stadiums and cheats. Once obtained, you can activate the card to use it in a game and boost a player's abilities.

I'm addicted to this game because there's the same anticipation I used to get when I collected real football cards—wondering if I'll get any Raider cards or a superstar. You can even trade or, better yet, wager your best card against a friend's best and play to keep them both. GR

gamers' republic sports

MADDEN NFL 2001

by: m. puccini developer: ea sports publisher: ea available: fall

Just as I'm thinking about Madden on the PS2, I'm also wondering what NFL GameDay will look like on Sony's new powerhouse. Because this GameDay 2001 engine is superb. The AI is excellent and the control is brilliant with the new Play As Any Skill Player and Total Control Passing mechanisms. With PAASP, you can completely control key offensive players after the snap, truly changing the AI routines of CPU defenders, be it make a d-back move differently to cover you, or knocking off an end with a block. With TCP, you can vary your passing depending on the defensive coverage.

Complimenting the engine are a variety of ambient touches to give it personality: breaking shoestring tackles, the field progressively showing wear and tear, performing double spins.

And the sounds of the game are all-around the best in the industry, from the bone-crunching tackles to the crowd noise and even the play-by-play of Dick Enberg and the color commentating of Phil Simms. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

NFL GAMEDAY 2001

by: pooch developer: red zone publisher: 989 studios available: now

B+

For DC owners, there are only two serious football games available. If you have Sega Sports' NFL2K (or plan to buy NFL2K1) don't bother with this game. And if you are considering getting NFL Quarterback Club 2001...please reconsider. In an overall comparison of the two games, NFL2K1 is so astronomically better than QBC2K1 that it makes me wonder why Acclaim is continuing to release this game (it's not much better than last year's version).

There is so much wrong with this title that I don't know where to begin. So let's cut to the most humorous aspects. Although I was highly amused at the referees who waddle like they're wearing loaded diapers, the ultimate laugh came when the trainer's cart came to take a player off of the field and the cart went right through a trainer. Graphically, although the models are well done, the constant popping is such a distraction that it makes this game completely unattractive. But even if it looked flawless, the sloppy gameplay would still keep this game on the permanent disabled list. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

NFL QB CLUB 2001

by: m. puccini developer: acclaim austin pub: acclaim available: now

C

Like its former incarnations, the NCAA GameBreaker 2001 engine is solid and, although the graphics seem dated, there are new player models and the characters move a bit smoother than last year with the addition of more than 250 motion-captured animations.

As with its brother, NFL GameDay 2001, NCAA GameBreaker 2001 includes the Total Control Passing option for more precise control of the quarterback as you underthrow, overthrow or lead the receiver, or lob or bullet the pass.

Some new extras to the game include more than 1,800 offensive and defensive plays spread throughout the 115 different NCAA Division 1A teams, as well as 64 classic teams from yesteryear, including the '92 Florida State team and Lou Holtz's '89 Notre Dame squad.

In college football play-by-play calling, you can't do any better than the voice of college football himself, Keith Jackson, returning to call the game once again. The music and ambient sound effects round out what is a tight, if aging, engine. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

GAMEBREAKER 2001

by: m. puccini developer: red zone pub: 989 studios available: now

B-

Out of all the football games, I probably enjoyed tooling around with this one's Create-A-Team feature the most. There just seems to be more customizable options than any of the others. It was cool creating my own Division 1A college with everything from city, state, school name and players all the way to rival school and the logos on the field.

NCAA Football 2001 builds on the franchise with improved offensive and defensive AI and new extras like the exclusive rights to the FedEx Orange bowl. EA Sports has also added to the gameplay engine with the ability to play as any player via the Advanced Player Control option.

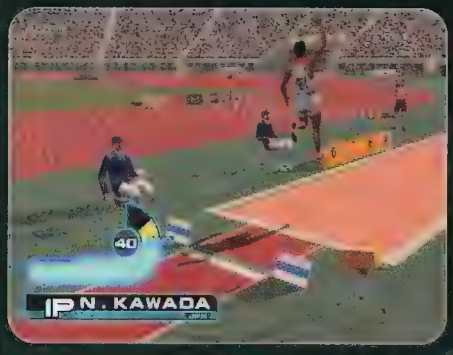
There are nice touches and features throughout EA's college pigskin title that help define its flavor. On the audio front, the echo of the announcer calling the game and reporting the final scores of the day's other games over the stadium's PA system lends a great ambiance. But my favorite feature is the Momentum Bar as it goes back-and-forth depending on which team's making the great plays. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

NCAA FOOTBALL 2001

by: m. puccini developer: ea sports publisher: ea available: now

B-



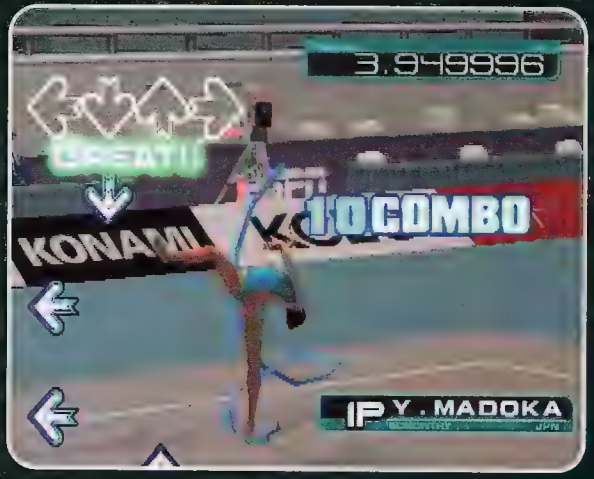
Konami's Track & Field series has to be the longest running sports franchise in video-game history. Its success is amazing, considering the finicky and evolving tastes of gamers and the fact that the play mechanics have remained virtually unchanged for nearly a decade. Not a bad thing, the play mechanics, but when it includes frantically tapping two buttons in sequence, one would hope that a suitable controller would be made to make the experience as comfortable as possible. (A minor gripe from someone who is a long-time fan of the series.)

This incarnation for the PS2 and Dreamcast showcases the most articulate and accurate player models the series has ever seen. Absolutely engaging and fluid animation routines are the major draw to the game. Those not even interested in playing stop to watch the performance play out as if it were a real competition with trained athletes. And for those who do play, the quick and varied events generate genuine tension.

Minute details, like facial expressions and player reactions, really add to the belief and atmosphere the game generates. Characters shake their head, wave to the crowd, kick the dirt and all other manner of natural responses before and after each heat. These ambient movements keep the flow of the game intense and focused.

The new machines have also allowed for new events to be integrated, the most stunning being the gymnastics-ribbon event. Using an interface similar to Konami's Dance Dance Revolution (a game yet to make it to a console here in the states), the athlete runs through a pre-programmed performance, while you tap the controller in sequence and rhythm to the music selected as directional keys scroll up the screen. Other than this inviting addition to gameplay, the other events play extremely close to the prior games, although the interface has been expectedly modernized.

So far, the game has managed to stay fresh and interesting. The only option missing is the ability to map the buttons to best fit your play style. We'll see how IT&F holds up while we wait for the review copy to show up. **GR**



gamers' republic sports

INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

by: t.stratton developer: konami publisher: konami available: november

ASTAL

[publisher] sega
[system] saturn
[genre] platformer
[year] 1995

Astal was the first 2D 32-bit game I had ever seen in motion. It was shown at the first E3 in 1995, and I remember spending nearly half the day playing the game, enamored of its look, thrilled with the thought that the Saturn was bound to be submerged in an ocean of games like Astal.

What a shame it is that that ocean turned out to be a puddle. After five years of playing countless 3D games, I can still return to a game like this and admire its timeless artistry and distinct, surreal presentation. The beauty of Astal is that it will never lose its appeal. It's certainly not the best-playing 2D game, but even today I consider it a wonder to look at, rivaled only by other hand-drawn marvels Symphony of the Night, Rayman and Lomax.

Astal, the new-age hero in the game, resides in a place that vibrates with ethereal energy. Luminous colors cycle like the Aurora Borealis in crystalline caverns. Brilliant purple vortexes swallow orange storm clouds as you jump across blocks floating in the sky. In a lake that looks like it was fed by a river of oil colors, transparent swirls of fog settle in the foreground.

Supplied with a stream of celestial musical compositions, the mystical tone of the game is quite extraordinary. Many of the creatures you encounter are pure fantasy, elegant and strangely delicate, skillfully constructed. Look deeply, and you'll notice a heavy new age theme; forms of crystals can be found in much of the imagery. Indeed, there is that little touch of 2D, hand-drawn magic in Astal that injects it with a timeless beauty. Looking at today's games, it's safe to say that there will never be another game like Astal. **-Brady Fiechter**

WORLD REPUBLIC

[i] *A very interesting collection of goodies out of Japan this month, the first and foremost being the absolutely staggering Guilty Gear X. Can you say "playable cartoon?" After you wipe the drool off your chin, check out the resurrected classic Blaster Master on PlayStation, the karaoke game Dream Audition, and the bizarrely unique Bikurri Mouse for PS2 among others.*

guilty gear 2 © sammy 2000

sega dreamcast / dc

World Republic Preview • developer **arc system works** • publisher **sammy** • available in japan **now (arcade)**

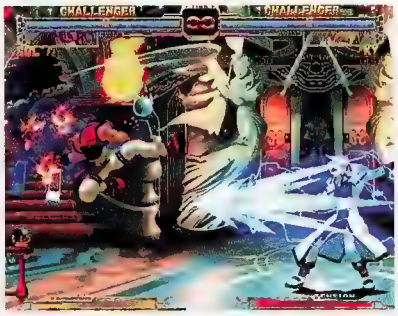
GUILTY GEAR X

Sammy's Guilty Gear X is the Naomi-powered arcade sequel to Guilty Gear, the 2D fighting game released for PlayStation back in April 1998. While the first was a cult hit, the sequel already boasts a much broader appeal. This time around the graphics are utterly jaw-dropping, and combined with a high-tempo fighting system, Guilty Gear X is set to mesmerize fighting game fans worldwide.

Eighteen playable characters are packed into Guilty Gear X—14 returning fighters and four new entries. To keep the game filled with high-tempo, offense-oriented action, the programmers have instituted a "Tension Gauge." The gauge rises as you attack opponents and diminishes if you rely only on defense. When the Tension Gauge is more than 50 percent full, you can use the Super Deadly Blow, an incredibly powerful move that can hit an opponent nearly anywhere on the screen. It may sound cheap, but the SDB ensures that players will constantly be on the offensive - turtles beware.

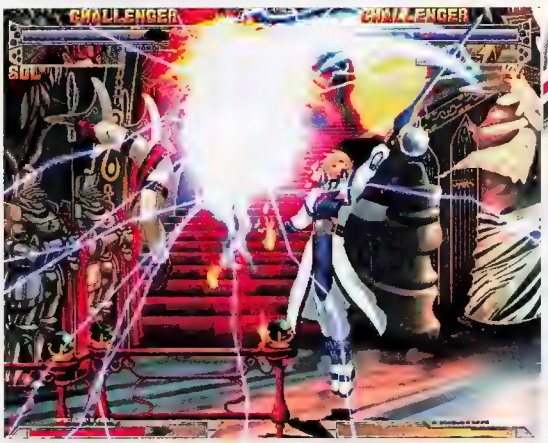
Other important maneuvers besides the SDB are Gattling Combos (chain attacks), Roman Cancels (like Alpha Counters) and Faultless Defense. Faultless Defense lets you block without taking chip damage, so long as you keep your tension gauge high. Also of note is that the cheap instant-kill moves from the original have been removed.

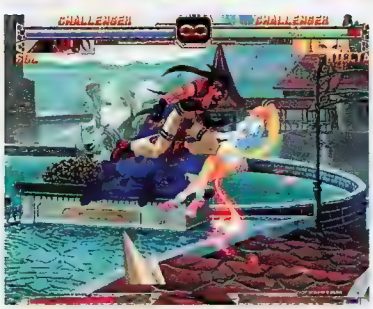
As you can tell from these screens, Guilty Gear X is one of the most incredible-looking games ever. The beautiful characters and awesome backgrounds are just astoundingly detailed. More than 7,500 frames are used for character animation—double the number in the previous game.

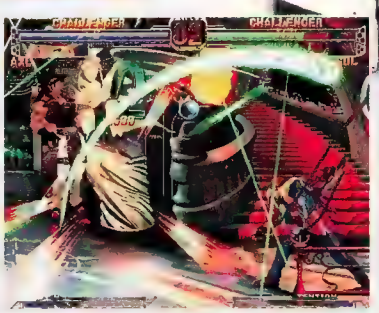


Perhaps best of all, Guilty Gear X will be coming home to Dreamcast later this year in Japan. Though no official word has been given about Guilty Gear X coming to the U.S., a number of companies have expressed interest, so hopefully it won't be long before it finds its way here.

-J. Sakai







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guilty gear 2 © sammy 2000

sony playstation / psx

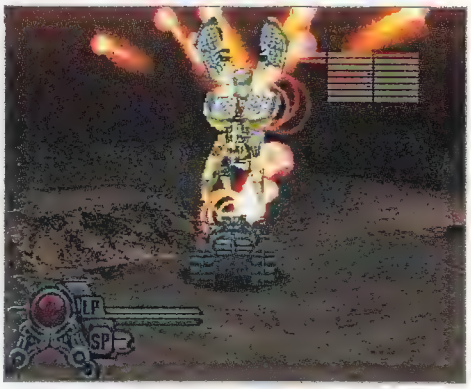
World Republic Preview • developer/publisher sunsoft • available in japan now

BLASTER MASTER

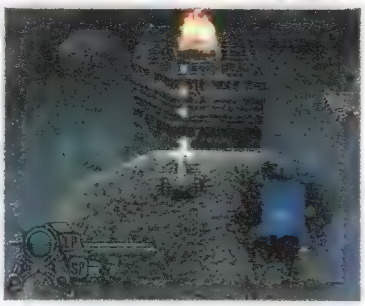
I can't tell you how great a feeling it is to climb back into Blaster Master, one of my favorite NES games of all time. Where the Euro-developed Blaster Master 2 failed to live up to the ingenious design of the original, this third installment, although 3D, more than makes up for what BM2 lacked. Sunsoft doesn't release games often these days, but when they do, they make them count. It's nice to have the purveyors of the beloved small-box Batman and Aero the Acrobat back on my radar. Bringing Blaster Master into 3D, Sunsoft has stayed true to the original concept, incorporating the magical multitask-based gameplay, split between the SJ7 tank and its pilot, and using textures akin to the graphic stylings of the original version.

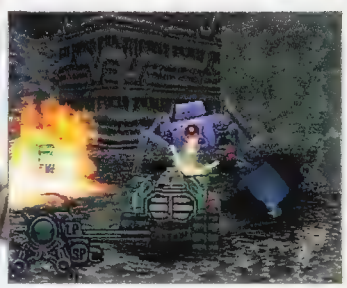
The story picks up some years after Jason's death (remember the kid who lost his frog?) at the hand of the lightning beings. His kids, Roddy and Elfie (Roddy as pilot and Elfie as mission control) now survey the planet with the Sophia J7 tank. As the brilliant CG opening melts away, a routine check soon turns into a full-blown infestation as the aliens responsible for their father's death reign from the skies once again.

The game scenario remains intact: in each multi-tiered area, joined by a network of tunnels, you must locate the generators that bar access to sealed areas, infiltrate, and ultimately lay waste to a big nasty boss. In between you'll be turning mechanized bugs into shoe goo by launching a laundry list of onboard weaponry. The secret to the game's mass appeal comes in the form of the SJ7's abilities. As you complete missions, Elfie will send upgrades until ultimately the SJ7 can hover, climb, turbo boost, and submerge. So as you plunge deeper and deeper into the planet's crust, the gameplay continually rises to the occasion.



The icing on the cake comes two fold: the graphics are excellent PS fare and the music is simply perfection, easily one of the best soundtracks of the year. In the minus column there's about a five-second loading time between each environment's many linked areas, the enemies regenerate, and playing as Jason, your view is often too skewed, but these quickly fade away as the overall gameplay and soundtrack do their thing. The import version is 100 percent user friendly if you can't wait for the American release later this year. **-D. Halverson**





blaster master © sunsoft 2000

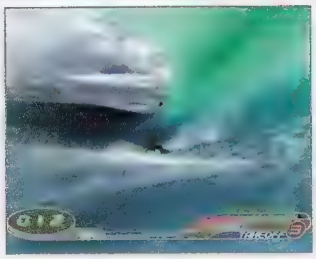
WORLD REPUBLIC ELECTRONICS WR電気製品

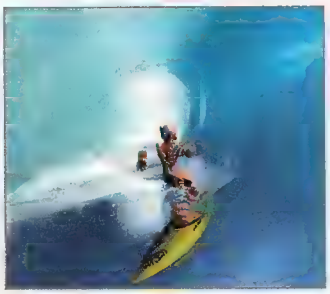
playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **ascii** • available in japan **fall**

SURFROIDS

Surfers are fine as long as the waves are breaking, but what to do on those flat days? With Surfroids, Ascii's hoping to remedy that problem, as well as provide ordinary land rovers the opportunity to catch that perfect set at glass off and feel the rush that only the ocean under your feet can provide. Of course, this is a game, and so certain liberties have been taken. For starters, during this competition you will compete against not only human opponents but aliens as well. Seems there is life out there, and they like to shred those waves. As luck would have it, Kevin Costner's vision has come to fruition and Earth is all but submerged under water. Other than these plausible elements, the game is as expected. You surf, attempt to pull off major tricks like backside air, rad laybacks, etc., and basically look real good for the judges. To keep things interesting, there are six stages, each with its own set of rules and parameters including the time it takes to catch the wave and how long you have to ride that sucker. What will make or break the game, being a showcase for PS2 agua, will be how convincing the water and its related properties are. Can ASCII do for the PS2 what Wave Race did for the N64? To assure players catch on quickly, they're even providing a mini surfboard to attach to your analog wands. The game stands at about 80 percent complete (as of late July), so look for the final product sometime this fall.-**D. Halverson**





playstation 2 / ps2

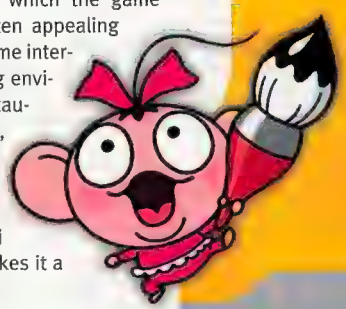
World Republic Review • developer **sugar & rockets** • publisher **sony** • available in japan **now**

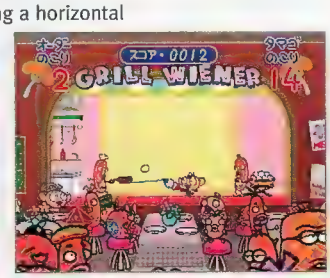
BIKKURI MOUSE

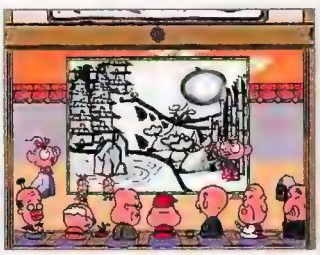
As the first game to use the PS2's mouse functionality, Bikkuri Mouse, a fabulously trippy drawing program, can be excused for feeling a little experimental. But that does nothing to take away from the fun or sheer creativity of this title. Bikkuri Mouse works with any USB mouse, so long as it has two buttons and a scroll wheel (you can also use the standard Dual Shock 2, but that isn't much fun, is it?), and it simply plugs directly into one of the two USB ports at the front of the PS2.

Once you're all set up with your mouse, the "game" begins, starting out first by teaching you the basics of drawing as it works in Bikkuri Mouse. Basically it breaks down into having a selection of colors or brush styles, augmented by a sort of magic wand that renders certain shapes into other objects. For example, drawing a circle will manifest a flower or a sun, while drawing a horizontal line will produce raindrops. For each environment, there are different shapes available to be discovered, and in one stage, actual sounds can be created by drawing lines and circles and things, which the game arranges with a rhythm, leading to often appealing electronic music. About the only real game interspersed throughout the various drawing environments, however, takes place at a restaurant called the Grill Wiener, and here, you've got to bounce fragile eggs into a waiting frying pan by drawing lines underneath them. Weird, but actually very fun. There's little hope of Bikkuri Mouse coming out over here, which makes it a great import purchase. It's super freaky.

-**M. Hobbs**







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bikkuri mouse © sony 2000 surfroids © ascii 2000

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PS2

World Republic Special Feature

CRITERION STUDIOS

If you're not familiar with Criterion Studios' games yet, don't worry; you will be soon. The company has already made a name for itself on Dreamcast, and they're now poised to become a major developer for PS2.

Criterion was founded in 1993 by several engineers working at Canon's research laboratory in the U.K. The company was the first one in Europe to receive early development systems for the PS2; its technology group has been working on PS2 longer than anybody else (except SCEJ), and they've developed Renderware 3—arguably the best version of the world's first consumer-level 3D graphics API. Renderware 3 is software that will enable developers to display data created in game development directly in a PS2 environment without the use of programming, which reduces tremendously the workload every developer has to face. The mighty tool is now being adopted by 60 game developers the world over. Criterion is not only involved in the development of the Renderware series. The company has also been engaged in game development since the establishment of Criterion Studios, a sister company, in 1996. After focusing on the PC with games like Redline Racer and Sub Culture, they decided to turn their attentions to home consoles. Their first offerings included Trick Style, one of the games that launched with the Dreamcast, and more recently, Deep Fighter, again for DC.

"The company has a great synergy with the technologies group that works one floor below us. Thus, we get to use the new versions of Renderware to help them make it better. We are having great fun on PS2 and are achieving great results ...quickly!" says Creative Manager Alex Ward. Currently, Criterion Studios are working on numerous titles including SRC and Stunt Squad for PS2. **-J. Sakai**

A BRIEF Q&A WITH SEAN TURNER, PROGRAMMER ON STUNT SQUAD FOR PS2.

GR: These Stunt Squad images are actual game screens? It seems you've solved the anti-aliasing problem.

Sean: Yes, these are game screens; the game is playable at this point. The SRC shots look a bit jaggy because they are not using our latest set of tools and technology. The Stunt Squad team has more experience on the PlayStation 2 right now. They have solved the anti-aliasing problem and there is also some motion blur going on there, as you can see.

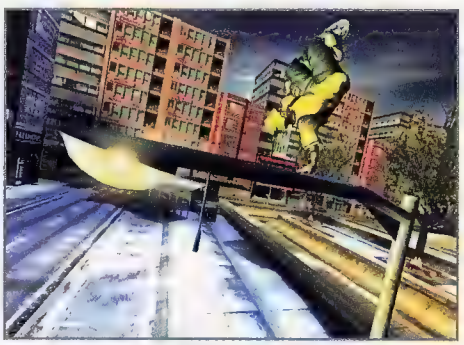
GR: In the case of SRC, will the jagged edges be taken away, or is it difficult to do so because of memory constraints?

Sean: There are actually two different problems here: flickering, which is caused by running at 60 hz and jaggies, which appear when you have high-contrast edges. There are multiple approaches to how you solve both of these problems. We are still experimenting, but don't think this will pose too much of a problem. Some methods require more video memory than others, while others cause different problems.

GR: So what is your favorite PS2 game so far, and do you think it could be achieved on Dreamcast?

Sean: Well, we were pretty impressed by the Japanese version of FIFA that we received courtesy of our friend up at EA Canada (thanks, GI-JOE if you are reading this). EA is going to be making some really fantastic games on the PS2. Could it be done on the Dreamcast? Sure, but you would have to be very skilled to do so [smile].

SRC is an action street racing game where the player gets to drive at high speeds through heavy traffic. The game is meant to be fast and exciting and will be released for Christmas 2001. During E3, creative manager Alex Ward invited us into their secret lair to play the demo. Although the game represented only six weeks worth of work from a team of six, it was surprisingly smooth.



Stunt Squad is a mission-based urban hoverboard game expected for PS2 next summer. The team who created TrickStyle for DC is doing the honors, but the game is not a sequel to TS.

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SLEEP:
Umi and Fuu are finding their ways back to Cephiro -- now Hikaru must finish her inner battle with Nova to revive her sword. Even if she succeeds, she will have a handful when she wakes up -- the six hours of sleep that Geo forced on Eagle is about to expire, and the NSX and its crew are going to commence their attack on the main castle of Cephiro! Will the castle be able to withstand the attack?

DREAM:
The Magic Knights are now back to full strength, but the fight for Cephiro's peace is far from over. Nova is now after Lantis to cause havoc within Hikaru's heart, and Eagle still hasn't given up even despite his prisoner status. While the princesses of Chizeta and Fahren decide whether or not to continue the invasion, what used to be Emeraude's crown is starting to change shape for the new Pillar...

MKRVS-0109
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World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **sega** • available in japan **now**

GIANT GRAM 2000

The original version of Giant Gram wrestling debuted on the Sega Saturn where it was known as All Japan Pro Wrestling Featuring Virtua. It was a new type of wrestling game that mixed the controls of a normal wrestling game with the combination moves of Virtua Fighter. Also, Wolf from Virtua Fighter was featured along with the All Japan Pro Wrestling characters. Now on Dreamcast, Giant Gram 2000 will be the third game in the series, and while the gameplay remains the same, it contains many more wrestlers than previous versions.

The main system of Giant Gram 2000 is similar to the game of rock-paper-scissors. The blow move is stronger than a throw, while a throw is stronger than a hold, and a hold counters a blow. The key to success is to predict which attack your opponent will choose next and use an appropriate counterattack.

So far, Sega has announced 30 wrestlers who will appear in Giant Gram 2000. Despite the huge withdrawal of talent from the All Japan Pro Wrestling league lately (including the most famous All Japan wrestler, Misawa) Giant Gram 2000 will be something of a dream match since it includes not only current wrestlers, but wrestlers who were with the organization before its breakdown and also legendary wrestlers who have passed away such as Giant Baba and Jumbo Tsuruta. Several hidden characters will be included as well.

GG2000 includes five substantial game modes: Arcade, Versus, Training, Edit and Legendary Game Reproducing mode. Players can compete in two leagues: Champion Carnival (singles tournament) and World's Strongest Tag League (tag tournament). Four players can even battle simultaneously in tag team matches. Legendary Game Reproducing mode recreates famous matches from the past, while edit mode, as the name implies, lets you create your own wrestler by choosing masks, pants, costumes and more. The number of skills (or "waza") that your original wrestler can learn has increased over the previous version, and these waza can be combined to learn even stronger waza using the unique 'Waza Mix System.' The most powerful of the waza is a special move called 'Burning Attack,' which is a unique, powerful move for each character that can be unleashed when your wrestler's fighting spirit level is at the maximum.

-T. MIURA

giant gram 2000 © sega 2000

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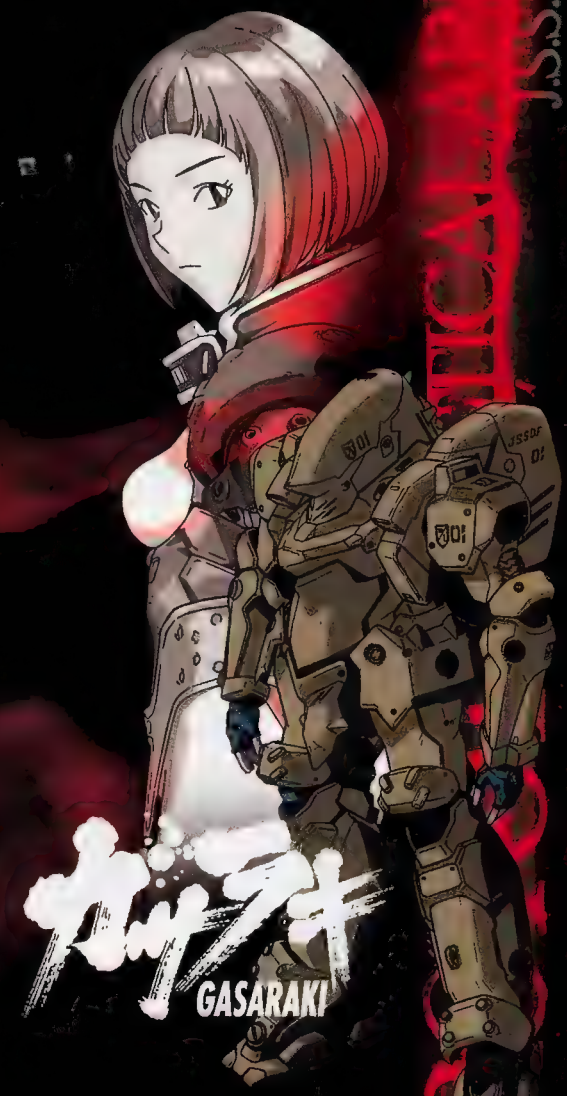

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PLEASE SAVE MY EARTH

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 PIONEER
180 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUB/SUB
★★★ FANTASY/ADVENTURE

I consider very few anime evil, but *Please Save My Earth*, a joint Viz, Pioneer, and Production I.G. product, is downright despicable. Let me set the record straight: *Earth* is, by all rights, a nearly perfect anime. A completely character-driven story, it's gorgeous to look at, the cells jump with vibrant life, crisp cell after cell embodying the reason why anime was always meant for DVD. Quoted on the back of the box is, "...the best animation based on shojo manga ever to be produced." For five of the six episodes, I'm inclined to agree. With a dramatic score by Yoko Kanno and Hajime Mizoguchi and a complexly engaging love triangle, framed with animation and voice acting so spirited that any man caught watching this will lower his head in shame—but never turn away—this is a very human production. Like *X* and *Fushugi Yugi* before it, *Earth* is a work of unusual emotional conviction. Oft wrought with overtones of ambiguous sexuality and light on action, it's a shame to categorize this as girl's anime or boy's anime instead of good fiction.

Six scientists from an alien civilization watch Earth from their post on the moon, dreaming of one day visiting our planet while their bodies wear away from a incurable disease. There's something of the prerequisite *Shojo* soap opera here: several members of the science team harbor unspoken feelings, and so it goes that death comes, whispering love unrequited. The twist comes as these aliens are reborn in the bodies of five Earth highschoolers and a child, and the commonality among them is a single dream of events on the moon that signify a time long past.

The joy with this series is watching the depth of the love story. Blink and you'll be lost. With its tight script dealing with issues of identity and reincarnation, *Earth* plays its moral stances fast and loose: A female scientist reincarnated as a young man, whose best friend is the reincarnation of the man she loved. A six-year-old boy is the reincarnation of a scientist deeply in love with our female lead, only she's a teenager and the love they shared can never be again.

There's considerably more, but *Earth* falls like a meteor by the finale. A collage of *Akira*-like imagery and unsatisfying metaphysical banter wrap up *Earth*'s ending like it was tacked on after a budget meeting. It's a shame, too. Had the end matched the intensity of the journey, Please Save My Earth would be recommended viewing. Stop the tape on episode five to maintain your high opinion. **GR**

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The Fight For Freedom has Begun!

The space colonies have grown tired of the oppressive rule by Earth Federation government. Resistance forces in the colonies have created special Mobile Suits called Gundams in order to battle the army of the Federation. Five young pilots are selected to sneak these Gundams down to Earth to wage a guerrilla battle.Can Heero, Relena, and the other Gundam pilots band together to end the Earth government's tyrannical rule or does Treize, the mysterious leader of OZ have other plans?

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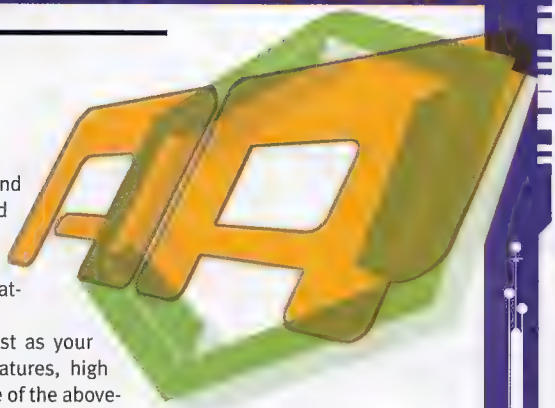
Produced by: BANDAI entertainment

GENERATOR GAWL

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 ADV FILMS
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

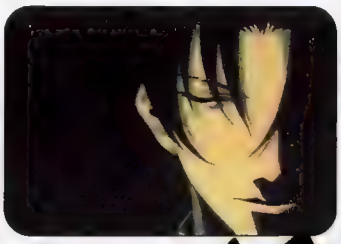


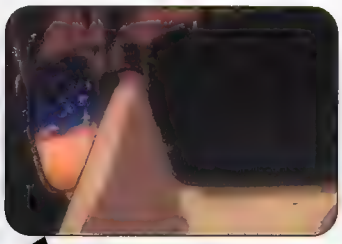
Gawl, Kouji and Ryo all seem to be normal young men who have been transferred to a new school for gifted teens. However, it quickly becomes apparent that this is not the case. Being transfer students is just a cover-up for their real agenda. When the young men first appeared in the middle of the night, they were chasing a huge monster called a Generator. One of the young men transformed into a similar monster and quickly dispatched with their quarry.

Personality-wise, Kouji and Ryo are all business. They have a mission to complete and nothing will stop them from accomplishing it, even if they have to put up with a lazy team member like Gawl who seems to only think of his stomach. Gawl's short temper, lackadaisical attitude, and apparent lack of good sense get him into trouble the first day the three boys arrive in town. Gawl accidentally harasses a young waitress at a restaurant while trying to obtain some food for his starving stomach. But this just ends up getting him arrested. Kouji and Ryo are forced to get him out of police custody with a made-up story.

There is a very good reason why Kouji and Ryo put up with Gawl's insolence and general troublemaking—because he is a Generator. Gawl is their sole defense whenever their mission is threatened.

Generator Gawl comes across at first as your basic anime—giant robot-looking creatures, high school students, etc. However, because of the above-par animation, mysterious plotline, and rather amusing personality quirks of Gawl, *Generator* doesn't get tossed into the bonfire pile of mediocre animation in the middle of the room. **GR**





AMAZING NURSE NANAKO VOL. 1

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 PIONEER
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED/SUBTITLED
★★ FANTASY/COMEDY

After hoping that this anime would follow in the bizarre tradition of *Golden Boy*, I am sad to report that there is nothing amazing about Nurse Nanako except for her chest. Her chest seems to be subject to laws of physics that the rest of the world does not have to deal with. Imagine breast wobble on the scale of Masami Ohbari, but not as well done. Nanako is an incompetent maid who works for a young doctor at the Ogami Hospital. She attempts to cook, clean, and take care of the doctor and anyone else who happens to have bad enough luck to be in her care. Nanako also seems to be the target of an experiment that is being jointly funded by the American government (yes, the evil Americans are up to no good again) and the Catholic church. She obviously does not want to be a part of the experiment, but since she is too unintelligent to survive out in the world without Doctor, she stays and manages to fumble her way through her job. To put it blatantly, the girl is dumb. Judging from the way she acts onscreen, it must have taken her a few months just to learn how to breathe.

The animation and character design, while very well done, are both unimaginative in the extreme. Yet *Nanako* is one of the new anime that takes full advantage of computer color and graphics. The blending of the computer generated and hand-drawn art is done rather seamlessly. The creators of *Nanako* seemed to really want to put a good science-fiction story behind this anime, yet when combined with Nanako's feeble brain and her gravity-defying body parts, the whole thing just comes off like a ridiculous T&A flick. You just can't take the story seriously. Wanting to strangle Nanako several times throughout the anime is a normal feeling that one may encounter while viewing this DVD. The most amazing thing about Nanako is that she hasn't managed to kill herself with her own stupidity yet. **GR**

"Ninja Girl Power!"

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It is said that whoever obtains the "Lovely Eyepatch" will inherit the swordsmanship and skills of one of Japan's greatest swordsman, Jubei Yagyu. Enter Jiyu Nanohana, an ordinary eighth grade girl who just happens to meet the special "requirements" of the eyepatch. But dealing with lovesick classmates and dueling teachers, will the overly sweet and innocent Jiyu accept the responsibilities of being the successor of Jubei? What's a girl to do!

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Produced by: BANDAI entertainment

GASARAKI

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 ADV FILMS
100 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

Three episodes deep, for all of its awesome tech-design and serious intent, I didn't really care about the characters. It wasn't until the fourth episode that the team of pilots the story begins to follow actually says more than a sentence between them. To its credit, *Gasaraki* is beautiful to look at, but it's cold and detached. That pretty much sums up the way I felt about *Patlabor 2*, the other project this team is famous for, but that's not to say this is not worth a look. Emulating the sensibilities of *Gundam* (production credit goes to the *Gundam* team, in fact) is a tightrope act. Heavy on tech-talk and political gray speak, Gasaraki's cast is a bunch of military stiffs and *X-File*-like enigmas. It's tough to get into an anime that has an entire cast of shady types. When the hero has all of the emotion of a mime (think: Rei Ayanami in both attitude and design), one begins to wonder why they should care at all. But the main reason to care is in this series' beyond-the-call-of-duty attention to detail. Taking the *Gundam* philosophy of mechs as tools and not harborers of personality, *Gasaraki* attempts to be a war epic, but comes off as an excellently drawn engineering schematic. With perhaps the closest thing going to real-world functional mechs, *Gasaraki*'s pride is in its reality-based science, if not its story. It's sheer ecstasy for tech junkies, at least at this point. To fill the gaping emotional story hole, it needs a few rivets. **GR**

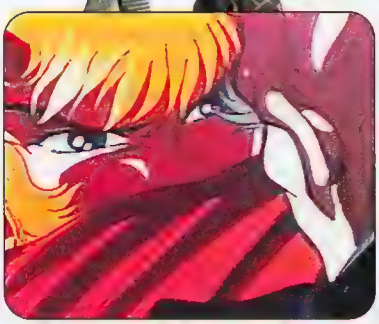
AR

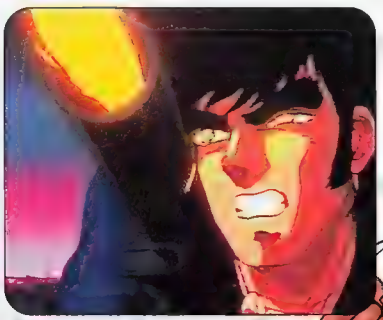
SUPER HYPER ACTION

アポカリプティク アニメ

STAR DEMON

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 ADV FILMS
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★1/2 FANTASY/COMEDY





Old-school anime. Me biased? Probably. But come on. It's sickening that these old anime (this one's dated 1989), with an emphasis on making each character look distinctive, nailing characterization of the lead by reacting to the situation and the ramifications therein, can be more emotionally entertaining than some 90 percent of the "pretty" emptiness put out now. Don't be put off by the old-school art and cheap animation. Don't even let Go Nagai's penchant for at least one female nude scene per episode deter you from the things they get right. Like last month's old-school surprise, *Goku: The Midnight Eye*, *Star Demon* is an effective story told simply. A young man gets the power of the Demon-Slayer of legend, he has to learn to accept his destiny, and because of this monumental task, such decisions have monumental repercussions. Like *Guyver*, the push behind this is well-done, non-satirical angst. No matter how silly the enemies are, or how campy the dialogue gets, Star Demon takes itself seriously using familiar cliches to create engaging caricatures (if not full characters). The playful fat guy, the insightful small guy, the distant hero, the badass with a valiant spirit—all intact. *Star Demon* comforts with the caress of familiarity, a guerilla tactic to examine his peculiar interests in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 116 ▸

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TRIGUN DVD VOL. 3

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 PIONEER
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED/SUBTITLED
★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

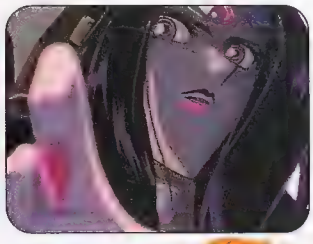
Trigun continues to be one of my favorite anime currently on store shelves. If this is your first encounter with *Trigun*, Vash the Stampede is the young blonde man in the red trench coat holding the big revolver. Vash has a mysterious past he doesn't remember. Somehow he has managed to obtain a $60 billion reward on his head, and he has no idea why he is a wanted man. His traveling partners, for now, consist of two female insurance agents who are supposed to keep him out of trouble because of the sheer amount of damage that follows him around as various bounty hunters attempt to collect the bounty on Vash's head. After finding a way off of the speeding people mover that he was last seen on, Vash meets up with a man in the middle of the desert named Nicholas Wolfwood. Nicholas is a traveling priest who carries a huge cross on his back. But he doesn't look or act like any priest that Vash has ever met. Nicholas carries himself and speaks like a man who knows how to handle himself in a gunfight. However, Vash says nothing of it to his new traveling companion. Vash and Nicholas arrive in a small town that is in dire need of money. Nicholas makes friends with a pretty young woman and her son, who can't make ends meet. He convinces Vash to do the right thing and participate in a shooting contest in order to win some money for the family.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 116 ▸

ウルフウッド ザ ガンマン

MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH OVA VOL. 1

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 MEDIA BLASTERS
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★ FANTASY/COMEDY



One of the Clamp studio's most popular anime continues in OVA format as Hikaru, Umi and Fuu must save their home planet Earth. With graduation only a week away, the three girls are all about to leave jr. high school and go their own ways. Hikaru, Fuu, and Umi all knew that this day would arrive, and their paths would one day take them away from each other. Because of this, they made a wish under a cherry tree, in hopes that the cherry blossom fairy would grant their wish for everlasting friendship and never let them part. The knowledge that they would remain friends forever didn't make imminent graduation anymore pleasant.

As Hikaru reminisces under the cherry tree, a small, white rabbit-looking animal hops out, and Hikaru swears to Umi and Fuu that she has seen the cherry blossom fairy. After chasing the animal and receiving a vision from a mysterious being along with a red jewel that is permanently attached to her hand, Hikaru realizes that there is more to their wishes underneath the tree than she thought. The Deity of Fire informs her that Earth is in horrible danger, and it is up to her and her friends to stop it. However, they do have at least one ally in Clef the priest who also returns from the original series. No matter how girly and *Sailor Moon*-ish Rayearth may seem at first, the things you cannot knock about it are the animation, and the character designs. Clamp never fails to impress in this category. There are character and clothing designs in *Rayearth* that are rivaled by very few other anime. If one can get past the annoying white rabbit creature called Mokona, and the three girls in school uniforms trying to save the world routine, then *Rayearth* is actually a really well done anime. Yes, even if you are on the male side of the species and very secure in your manhood, you too can enjoy watching *Rayearth*. You still may feel the urge to throw something sharp at the rabbit, but don't do it. Good TVs are expensive these days. GR

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STREET FIGHTER ALPHA VOL. 1

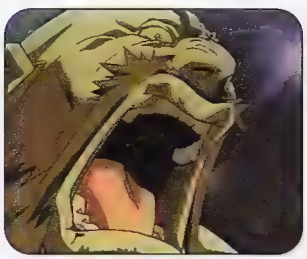
REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

This new anime from Capcom can immediately reduce any Street Fighter fan from educated gamer to gibbering, grunting idiot within the first five minutes. Anyone who saw the preview screening shown at Anime Expo 2000, and was asked to comment on it, could only utter the words, "My God." By allowing Manga Entertainment to bring us the *Street Fighter Alpha* anime, Capcom has hereby cleared itself of any perceived transgressions against the human race. Yes, it's that good. From Akuma's first grunt to the time you see Chun-Li's Spinning Bird Kick, Alpha will have you squarely in its grip. Seeing *Street Fighter Alpha* amongst 400 other frothing, screaming and grunting Street Fighter maniacs was just like seeing Metallica in concert, with the slight exception that no one was throwing beer bottles.

The story for *Alpha* is above par for the fighting-game-turned-anime genre. It won't be rivaling Miyazaki, but it definitely kicks *Darkstalkers* in the proverbial ass. The plot is set in Japan, where Ken and Ryu are visiting the grave of their dead master. A small boy approaches Ryu and claims to be related to him. Ryu accepts the boy's explanation to be true, while Ken plays the skeptic. All the while, Ryu is trying to fight off demon possession and the full persona changeover to Evil Ryu. A large street-fighting tournament is being held around the same time, and Ryu's newfound sibling is intent on entering the tournament. Unfortunately, even though the boy is well trained, this isn't a normal street fight. He is up against the likes of Vega and Zangief, and not the usual thugs he is used to dispatching with not much more than a yawn.

With appearances by Chun-Li, complete with her Alpha uniform, Zangief, Sakura, Vega, Akuma, Rose and Dan, the fighting gets out of hand very quickly. Fans don't have to wait very long to see a hadouken tossed about, unlike the *Street Fighter II V* series, where we had to wait for two episodes for Ryu to throw a single fireball. If you have any problems with the *Street Fighter Alpha* anime, it won't be for lack of eye candy; Capcom went all out with the animation.

The character designs are authentic Capcom artwork with the telltale large feet and hands, not to mention Ken's trademark eyebrows. The fight scenes are beautiful with moves that are torn straight from the game. Seeing Zangief's Final Atomic Buster will make anyone flinch, Street Fighter fan or not. To put it simply and solidly, if you enjoy Street Fighter in any way, shape or form, then don't miss this new anime. **GR**



SF-Alpha

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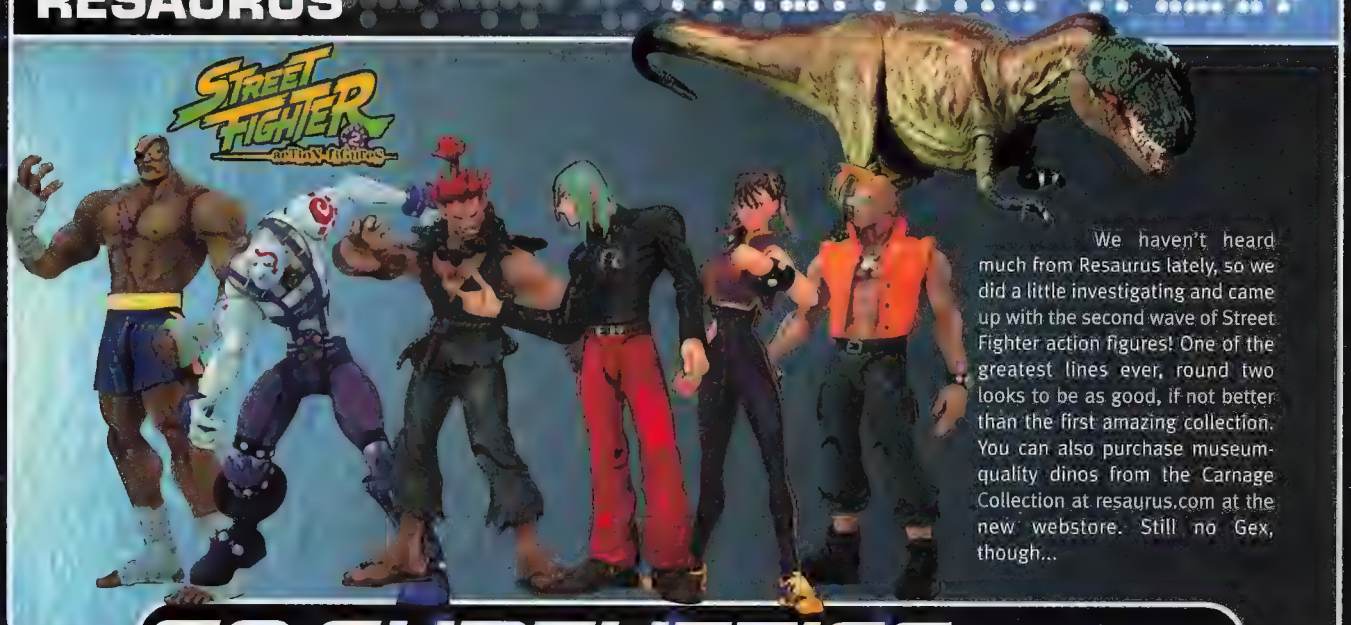
13 UP

BLUE BOX TOYS

bbi, a newly formed division of Blue Box Toys, obviously [illegible] good character design, as they have wisely acquired the deed to Legend of Dragoon, Sony's RPG epic that's sweeping the nation. All the main cast is present and accounted for, including Dart, Lloyd, Shana, Kongol, Lavits and Rose. Each measure in at 7", are well articulated and sculpted with the collector in mind. Also in the works and cause for much jubilation are the highly anticipated Kain and Raziel figures. These blood-sucking beauties also measure in at 7" and are fully poseable. Raise a chalice—Kain is coming home.

RESAURUS



We haven't heard much from Resaurus lately, so we did a little investigating and came up with the second wave of Street Fighter action figures! One of the greatest lines ever, round two looks to be as good, if not better than the first amazing collection. You can also purchase museum-quality dinos from the Carnage Collection at resaurus.com at the new webstore. Still no Gex, though...

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CLEAR EDITION
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• Sony MVC-CD1000

Sony • www.sony.com • Retail: $1300

Desirability: ••••••••

Sony continues to expand on their domestically popular Mavica line of digital cameras, the latest iteration of which uses 156Mb 3" CD-Rs to record up to 1,000 high-resolution images. The obvious benefit of using CD-Rs is that they are incredibly cheap, and images taken by the camera can be considered instantly archived. Also, the pervasiveness of CD-ROM drives means that images can be saved very easily to a PC or Mac, without any cumbersome media readers hogging up valuable USB ports. The only downside is that the CD-Rs are not rewritable, but they're so cheap, who cares?

Additional features of the camera include a 10x optical zoom (20x digital), a 2.5" LCD display, optical image stabilization, and a through the lens viewfinder, courtesy of its single lens reflex design. Formats supported include JPEG, TIFF, Text still image, and even MPEG 1 video for short and grainy full-motion clips. But perhaps the best feature of all is that the camera just looks really cool, like something astronauts might use on the International Space Station.

•Panasonic SV-SD70

Panasonic • www.panasonic.com • Retail: $400

Desirability: ••••••••

Panasonic has just countered Sony in the removable media music player wars with their entry, the SV-SD70. Unlike Sony's devices, which use a secure version of their Memory Stick technology called Magic Gate, Panasonic's little machine uses Smart Media cards, here branded SD for Secure Digital. Functionally similar to Sony's Memory Stick, the even smaller SD cards have identical capacities. As for the machine itself, which is much smaller than a pack of cigarettes, it plays back AAC music files, in the same way that Sony's devices use ATRAC3 to encode MP3s and CD tracks.

GRGEAR

BY MIKE HOBBS

• Power Mac G4 Cube

Apple • www.apple.com/powermaccube • Retail: $1799

Desirability: ••••••••••

Apple stunned the world again with its brilliant industrial design when it recently unveiled the new Power Mac G4 Cube. Measuring a scant 8"x 8", this gorgeous piece of hardware is powerful enough to qualify as a supercomputer, thanks to its ability to perform well over a billion floating point operations per second. And the lack of an internal fan means that the machine makes absolutely no sound, all the better to make the best of the harmon/kardon crystal ball speakers that will come bundled with the system.

Apple has also seen fit to redesign the somewhat maligned circular mouse that first started shipping with the original iMac. From the G4 Cube onward, all Macs will come with Apple's new Optical Mouse, which has no roller ball and features an entire glass-clear upper surface that serves as the mouse button.

• Digital Wallet

Mindsgear • www.mindsgear.com • Retail: $499

Desirability: ••••••

Have you ever wished that you had a little 6Gb hard drive that you could carry with you anywhere? Well, maybe you haven't, but given some thought, I'm sure we could all find a use for one. The Digital Wallet from Minds @ Work is just such a device, powered by Motorola's Cold Fire Processor and containing a miniscule 6Gb Toshiba hard drive within its slight, 12 ounce frame. Its fast USB interface, compatible with both Mac OS (8.6 and higher) and Windows 98/2000, allows for up to 12 Megabit per second data transfer rates. When full, the Digital Wallet can store up to 6,000 high resolution photos, over 100 hours of digital audio, or the equivalent of 6,000 novels, and its rechargeable nickel metal hydride batteries are good for up to 200 minutes between charges.

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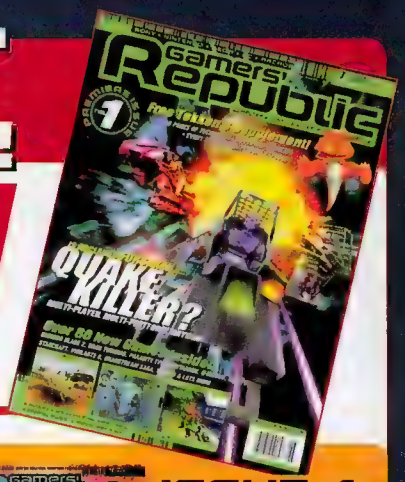

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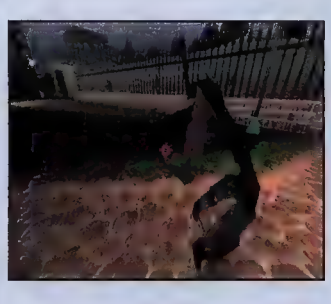
Rainbow Six

The following codes are inputted during gameplay once you've configured the teams and started a mission. To deactivate the codes, repeat the procedure.

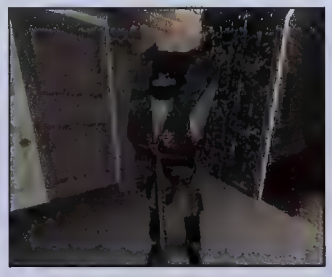
ALLY MCBEAL MODE
To make the characters wafer-thin, hold the Analog Stick Down + hold the D-Pad Down and press Y.



I AM GOZER THE GOZARIAN
To activate Avatar God mode, which is invincibility for just yourself, hold the Analog Stick Up + hold the D-Pad Down and press A.

WE'RE ALL GOZERS
To activate Team God mode, which makes your whole team invincible, hold the Analog Stick Left + hold the D-Pad Down and press B.

BREATHE, BREATHE IN THE AIR, DON'T BE AFRAID TO CARE
To activate the humorous Heavy Breathing mode, where the lungs inflate so much that the flak jackets go over the characters' heads, hold the Analog Stick Down + hold the D-Pad Down and press A.



THERE'S NOTHING LIKE GETTIN' MEGA HEAD
To activate Mega Head mode, hold the Analog Stick Left + hold the D-Pad Down and press X.

Nightmare Creatures II

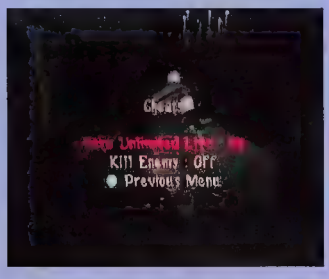
Here are some extremely helpful codes for those who may be finding their adventures with Herbert Wallace a trifle bit difficult.

THESE LEVELS ARE FRIGGEN HARD...THANKS FOR THIS CODE GR, YOU'RE THE GREATEST
To access any level in the game, from the Main Menu screen, highlight Options and press B for about three seconds until you hear a beep, then release the button and press Y, A, X, B. then press X for about one second until you hear a beep, then release the button and press B. If performed correctly, you will see the level names at the top of the screen.

THAT DIDN'T HURT AT ALL
The following code is invaluable because it can be used all the time. During gameplay, as your life bar gets depleted, simply simultaneously press B + X + Y.

NOT HELPFUL BUT IT LOOKS BETTER
To make the text disappear from the pause screen, pause the game (duh) and simultaneously press X + Y.

CHEATING WON'T GET YOU VERY FAR IN LIFE...UNLESS YOU'RE A POLITICIAN, SO WHY NOT
To access the Cheats menu, pause the gameplay and hold down the Left Trigger and Right Trigger while inputting the following: Left, B, X, Left, B, X, Left, B, X, A, X.



NFL Gameday 2001

The following codes are entered in the Easter Eggs menu. From the Main Menu, select Options and then Easter Eggs and then Add Entry.

WHO SAYS SIZE DOESN'T MATTER?!
To play with midget players, enter: TINY GUYS

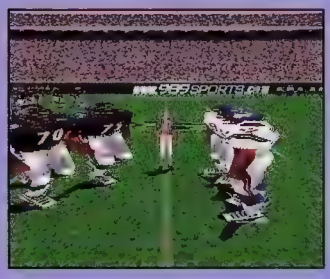
I SMELL BACON
To play with a gigantic football, enter: BIG PIG

GAMEDAY FIELDS FOREVER
To play on a special GameDay field, enter: GD FIELD

OUCH!!
To make the volume exaggerated on really big hits, enter: CRUNCH

YOU'RE SO GOOD
To make your players have juiced up special moves, enter: SPECIAL MOVE

SUPER SIZE IT, PLEASE
To play with humongous players, enter: GIANTS

YOU AIN'T BETTER THAN ME


To make all the players of equal ability, enter: ALL EVEN

CATCH AS CATCH CAN
To make the receivers catch everything, enter: STICKEM

EARNING A PH.D. IS SIMPLE
To play on super hard difficulty level, enter: UNBEATABLE

NOTHING LIKE A GOOD STIFF ONE
To make players have a super stiff arm, enter: JACK HAMMER

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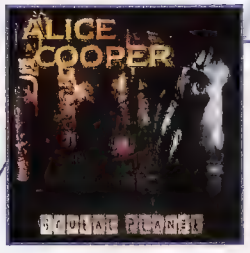

Alice Cooper's got something to say. The granddaddy of horror rock has come full circle and assembled the Y2K equivalent of his best work like *Billion Dollar Babies* and *Killer,* except this time out his usually over-the-top banter is as serious as a heart attack. Alice has taken a good long look at the world and seen his way clear to cutting through the BS, straight to the heart of what's on his mind through some old-school AC-style rock. The music lacks the whimsical, playful overtones found in such classics as "Hello Hooray," "I love the Dead," "Halo of Flies" and "Killer," but the overall sound remains remarkably intact and surprisingly viable—albeit at times a tad on the raunchy, overly formulaic side. You won't find a whole lot of the guitar solos or haunting backup vocals (outside of the title track) that helped define Alice's sound, but you will find a good mix of old-school licks and sincere melodies like the stellar "Take It Like a Woman." The title track exposes the materialistic and often hateful side of society, and from there Alice beats home his views on gluttony, our infatuation with technology, and even womanhood in general. He does so in an uncannily resolute manner, however, and with great conviction, exhibiting the worldliness he's acquired as one of rock's most enduring and genre-defining acts. Alice has become quite the modern-day poet. Of the eleven new songs, "Pick Up the Bones," "Take It Like a Woman," "Pessi-mystic," and "Cold Machines" are the highlights. *Brutal Planet* may not be the old-school Alice Cooper I'd hoped for, but it comes close enough and at the same time has something to say. And who better to preach to today's youth than the man that dared spit in the face of convention while Marilyn and Rob were still sharpening their axes.

Alice Cooper-Brutal Planet
Spitfire Records, Domestic
B

Motley Crue's last record, *Generation Swine*, saw the band take a rather huge departure from their usual dose of trademark metal. Whether this was due to Tommy Lee's infatuation with hardcore, later explored on the raunchy and utterly crappy *Masters of Mayhem*, or an attempt to blend with today's fragmented music scene, it just didn't gel. I honestly thought it was the beginning of the end for a timeless and, above all, hyper-talented metal act. It was the kind of record that made you picture an audience of sweaty, misguided youth flailing and spitting in a mosh pit rather than the booby-flashers and upbeat rockers that usually frequent Crue concerts. What drew me to the Crue in the first place was their musicianship and songwriting. Sixx on bass and Mars on guitar did (and do now more than ever) shred, classic Tommy Lee, pre-Pamela, was a force to be reckoned with, and Vince Neil has always had the lead singer role completely dialed in with a one-of-a-kind voice and enough backstory to keep VH1 busy for the next decade. Thankfully, it's that old Crue who show up for *New Tattoo,* along with drummer Randy Castillo who fills the record with a commanding presence on drums. Not only have the Crue found their way all the way back to "Girls, Girls, Girls"-era rock, but they have managed to actually improve on their overall sound. *New Tattoo* is laced with vintage Mars guitar solos and at least five songs that would have been Top 10 hits in the early 90s. "Hell on High Heels" is the "Girls, Girls, Girls" of the new material and "New Tattoo" is the "Home Sweet Home." Mainstream critics may fault the record's narrow scope and feel-good foundation (the Crue still sing about man's favorite pastime—women), while in the same breath kissing the pimply butts of drivel like (add appropriate Boy Band here). So do your duty and use them as kindling. Motley Crue is once again the soundtrack to living large and having fun.

Motley Crue-New Tattoo
Motley Records/Beyond Music/BMG
A-

Gamers' Re[public] Music Reviews

Audiophiles
What GR is listening to this month

D Halverson
1. **MOTLEY CRÜE** *new tattoo*
2. **PERFECT CIRCLE** *mer de noms*
3. **BT** *movements in still life*
4. **HEAVY METAL FAKK2** *soundtrack*
5. **QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE** *R*

B Fiechter
1. **PHILIP GLASS** *aguas de amazonia*
2. **BJORK** *homogenic*
3. **TORI AMOS** *venus and back*
4. **VERTICAL HORIZON** *live stages*
5. **CHRONO CROSS** *Music Selection*

M Hobbs
1. **PAUL VAN DYK** *out there and back*
2. **ORBITAL** *middle of nowhere*
3. **THE ORB** *pomme fritz*
4. **PET SHOP BOYS** *disco 2*
5. **APHEX TWIN** *i care because you do*

H. Pan
1. **GATECRASHER** *Global sound system*
2. **PAUL VAN DYK** *Out there and back*
3. **MOVIN' MELODIES** *ATB*
4. **DJ DOBOY** *Tranquility Special Edition*
5. **GATECRASHER** *Wet*

Pooch
1. **DJ SHADOW** *endtroducing*
2. **2PAC** *greatest hits*
3. **BEENIE MAN** *art + life*
4. **LENNY KRAVITZ** *circus*
5. **METALLICA** *ride the lightning*

N. Lui
1. **GATECRASHER** *Global sound system*
2. **MEGUMI HAYASHIBARA** *Vintage S*
3. **HAUNTED JUNCTION** *soundtrack*
4. **JUBEI-CHAN** *soundtrack*
5. **AFROMEDUSA** *Pasilda*

S. Dempster
1. **DESTINY'S CHILD** *The writing's on the wall*
2. **EMINEM** *Marshal Mathers LP*
3. **2PAC** *Greatest Hits*
4. **DIDO** *No angel*
5. **BOYS 2 MEN** *Evolution*

S. Akinnuso
1. **SPACE CHANNEL 5** *soundtrack*
2. **BEN HARPER** *Burn to Shine*
3. **BLACKSTAR** *Blackstar*
4. **MOS DEF** *Black on Both Sides*
5. **COMMON** *Like Water For Chocolate*

B Elmquist
1. **QUEENSRYCHE** *greatest hits*
2. **FACE TO FACE** *reactionary*
3. **KITTIE** *spit*
4. **SOULFLY** *Primative*
5. **DREAM THEATER** *Change of Seasons*

C. Hoffman
1. **NOBUO UEMATSU** *ff8 piano collections*
2. **YASUNORI MITSUDA** *chrono cross ost*
3. **SARAH McLACHLAN** *fumbling towards ecstasy*
4. **YASUNORI MITSUDA** *creid*
5. **CADILLAC ANGELS** *live*

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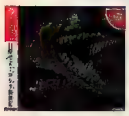
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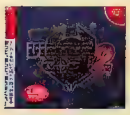
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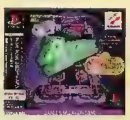
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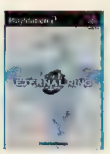
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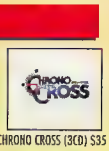
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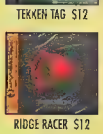
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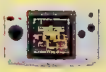

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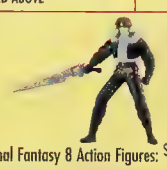
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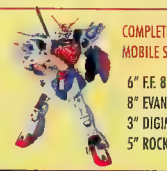

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PARASITE EVE

REVIEW

ADV FILMS(www.advfilms.com)
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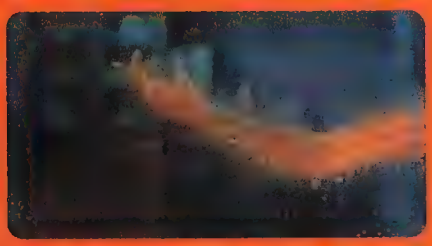
UNRATED (CONTAINS GRAPHIC VIOLENCE)
REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO



There's schlocky material and then there's junk. Take, for example, Warner Bros.' big-budget, Jet Li fiasco, *Romeo Must Die*. I saw this movie just before seeing *Parasite Eve*, and I'm fairly certain that it qualifies as disposable junk. *Parasite Eve* on the other hand, by Japanese director Masayuchi Ochiai, is honest at least, if perhaps a bit rough looking. In trying to turn video-game material (and a popular Japanese science-fiction novel) into a more involving story—in this case, an extremely effective love story—Ochiai's work deserves applaud for what it is—pure schlock. If you can get past the overall amateurish look, at least when compared to more extravagant American productions, there's something admirable in a story that makes an enemy of cellular mitochondria. Geneticist Nagashima Toshiaki (Mikami Hiroshi) is on the verge of utilizing the cellular parasite mitochondria to cure diseases, patch up bodies, and be the do-all elixir from the proverbial fountain of youth. When Kiyomi (Hazuki Ryona), his wife of barely a year, dies in an accident on their anniversary, the guilt-stricken Nagashima decides to reanimate her by culturing her cells.

The only problem here is that the cells are actually sentient -- billion-year-old organisms that orchestrated Toshiaki's current actions in order to give their legion form. Shifting from golden goo to an almost ethereal-like entity embodied in Kiyomi, the organisms decide to take their evolutionary claim on Earth at humanity's expense. Ultimately, it's up to Toshiaki's love to stop the parasites and save the planet from his Frankenstein monster.

If the actors had taken this any less seriously than they did, if the love story played any less effectively, this could've been a disastrous project. In the realm of credible sci-fi, sentient mitochondrion is about as absurd as rebellious fingers (you know..the ones that attack your face for no good reason), and Ochiai wisely hides the element as a functional plot device.

His real interest, and ultimately the interest of the viewers, is in the despair of Toshiaki and his dealing with the fact that not only were his actions manipulated, but that his entire world may be based on lies. There are some fantastic performances by Hiroshi and Ryona. The pair manage to tie together B-movie scenes with an intensity that gives this wacky project credibility and creates the illusion that it stumbled into getting it right.

Still, Ochiai's easily American-influenced pacing and composition, with uncharacteristicly tight shots and high-speed Hong Kong editing, make *Parasite Eve* a visual attention grabber for the two-hour running time.

The outrageous pseudo-science and special effects might turn most away, but the emotional payoff hammered into you by the film's end, should keep the patient fan entertained, if not a bit satisfied. Too bad *Romeo Must Die* can't say the same.

THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

You'd think fronting two powerhouse bands would keep him busy enough, but it seems that Maynard James Keenan, lead singer of Tool and the newly formed A Perfect Circle, is now branching into acting. After directing A Perfect Circle's latest video, "Judith," David Fincher decided to cast Keenan in one of the leading roles alongside Nicole Kidman in "Panic Room," Fincher's next project. Could this mean Keenan will provide some darkly compelling, original music to the film? With Fincher's gloomy aesthetic sure to pervade the screen, we can imagine no better fit.

Director Sam Raimi will certainly do justice to the Spider-Man film, and now the rest of the components are starting to fall into place, starting with a bit of surprising but inspired casting for the Peter Parker character. Toby McGuire will jump out of his usually understated, emotionally confused characters into the tightly wound tights of the classic Spidey.

So, what do you do when your leading man decides to work part time on one of the most popular cult shows on television? If you're Chris Carter, creator of X-Files, you go get Robert Patrick, who is best known as the T-1000 terminator in T2, to fill a major role. Is Carter trying to position a new leading man in hopes of continuing the deflating series after its stars bow out?

The incomparable Tim Burton will inject his delightful visual style into the Planet of the Apes, and Mark Wahlberg, aka Dirk Digler, has been cast as lead monkey Colonel George Taylor. Mr. Wahlberg is perfect for this role, having already dealt with rubber prosthetics in the past.

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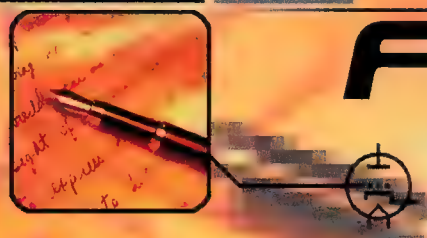


Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to:
Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215, Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).

Dear GR,

I'm writing this in response to what you said in "The Republic" Q&A section of your website. While I believe that Gamers' Republic is a great magazine and has an informative web-site, the answer you gave to a gamer asking if he should stick with Sega or wait for PS2 shows you are slightly out of touch with your audience. Your advice was "why does it have to be an either or situation," and to support both systems. Well, for many of us it HAS to be an "either situation" because we don't get games for free and most games are still between forty and sixty dollars if they are new. I strongly believe that your publication could be even better if you take into account that every decent game is not a "must have" and most gamers can only afford a few games a year. If you read all of this, then I thank you very much.

Dear Anonymous,

You should know that our web site and magazine are connected by name only. The web department is run by a separate staff so that our online patrons can be treated to a fresh perspective. Our online guys are just that, online guys, and so there sensibilities are somewhat different from ours. A great number of our online patronage are affluent technology savvy kids and adults (not that you aren't) and so it doesn't surprise me that they responded as such. My advice is that if you can only afford one system, the best thing to do first and foremost is consider the exclusive characters a given company represents. Each of the bigs have a unique universe that helps define their system (Sonic, Mario, Crash etc.) while third parties for the most part develop across the board. So it's best to hook up with the characters that make you happy— not chase technology. I think Nintendo has helped define that strategy. We realize that the majority of people can't buy every game they'd like to, but it's still our duty to let those who can know when we think a title is a must have. Also, since gaming has swollen to biblical proportions and larger budgets are being afforded, the number of quality games is increasing. Also take into account that we try to give the most coverage to the best games within these pages. Our cutting room floor is full of awful titles! If you ever have a question, feel free to email us editors as well.

Dear GR,

In your next issue, could you please include a story about the world wide Shining Force Campaign? So far, many people have sent in their letters and we even have affiliates (although most are UK based). We come to you GR because we feel our campaign will reach the majority of gamers through your mag and site.

Shining Force Campaign: Phase II
Sega of America HQ Rep - Richter
www.shining-force.co.uk/campaign/

Dear Richter,

Why aren't you in Castlevania where you belong?

Actually, we admire your dedication to the sequel you desire. Shining Force is one of the single most revered strategy rpg series in all the land. We're here to support you and will certainly grant your request. We've been to the site and it's damn impressive. It certainly is amazing what gamers can achieve when they want to relive a great experience.

Best of Luck - GR Editorial Staff

Dear GR,

Great magazine and all, and forgive me if this is a bit late, it takes a while for GR to find its way to anywhere near me, but there's just a little error in your June issue. In your TGS round up you mention the "Sega CD original" version of Silpheed. Oops... See, Silpheed not only pre-dates the Mega CD, it pre-dates the Genesis (or MegaDrive as it's known over here). In 1989 Sierra converted it to the PC in its first Western release, from the original version on an NEC console. Oh well, not to worry about that, just thought you might like to know. It's a quality game, and is not too hard to find for download. Although, obviously, only if you own the original...

Anyway, on the subject of Silpheed, do you guys have any idea if the PS2 version will make it to America or even (fingers crossed) Europe? Because if it isn't released here, I'll have to get an import PS2. Oh well, I guess I'll find out if you ever printed a reply in a couple of months...

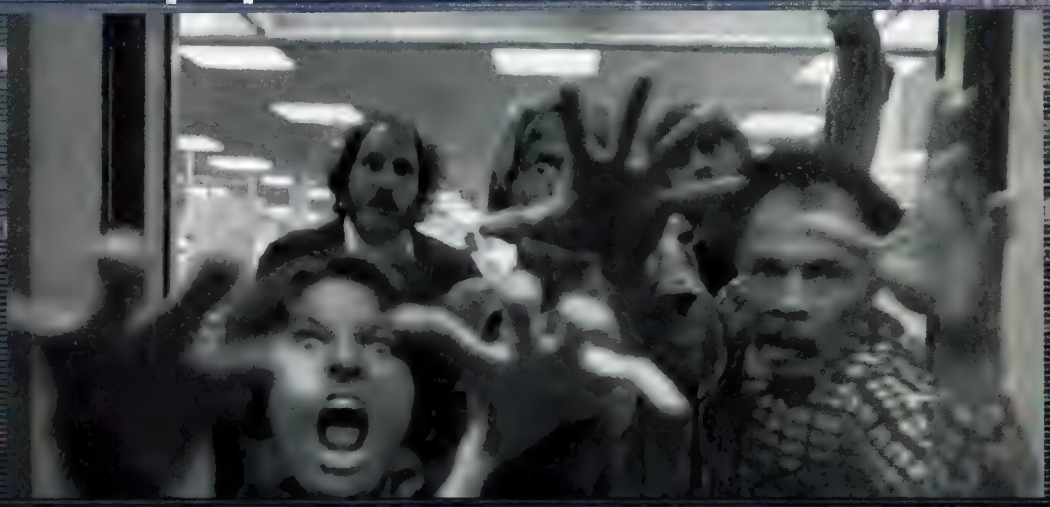
Kevin Church

Dear Kevin,

Prompted by your letter we did some checking and before we knew it we were playing Silpheed: Super Dogfighter on our PC—developed in 1988 by Game Arts no less! That's like a little treasure. Too bad it crashes like a moe-foe though. It isn't often we get stumped, so major props for the information.

As for the U.S. version, if you flip to the inside cover you'll see some blazing screenshots! The game is indeed headed stateside and, better yet, it's a launch title! Thankfully the localization is being handled by Working Designs, a U.S. third party famous for showering respect on top-notch import games. Silpheed will enjoy excellent advertising, distribution, and will no doubt sport some great packaging.

Ten people locked in a house with no GR...



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▸ GRANDIA II, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

It seems that in many ways, Grandia II is a finely polished reflection of Grandia, sharing many of the qualities that made the same game such a memorable adventure. Says Mr. Katsunori Saito, "If you liked Grandia, Grandia II is something you will be happy with. I am very confident about this." From what I've played so far, I wholeheartedly agree. **GR**

▸ ECCO, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65

are, in a word, stunning. Together with the heavenly and uncannily befitting audio, after a few hours, no matter how frustrated, Ecco will lull you into a trance-like state. It's really quite special and endlessly engaging.

With so much ocean to cover, laden with nooks and crannies, the game does have some collision hitches should you wedge Ecco into a tight spot, but I found that if you just lay off the controls, he almost always repositions himself automatically. All in all, the game is tight and the control is just about perfect. If you bought the game and just swam around, it would probably be worth the price of admission. I guarantee, if you put on this game in front of anybody except for maybe a serial killer, the result will be instant oohs and aahs. You may actually get attached to Ecco, like a pet. The game evokes a mood that is almost indescribable. For you vintage Yes fans out there, I can only describe it as a Roger Dean cover come to life like living art. I was especially happy to discover the game brimming with gorgeous 2D levels providing some of the best puzzles and a visual flare you'll have to experience to believe.

As great as this all sounds, I must warn you, the game is hard. It's almost overly complex, hardly ever straightforward and presents a whole new batch of variables to contend with. Ecco has to breathe, for one thing, and much of the game takes place in tight tunnels. You need to feed him too, and there are myriad hazards of the sea, like poisonous fish, piranhas, rays, eels, coral, and sharks. There are many times when you simply won't have any idea what to do when resourcefulness and/or intense reasoning are your only devices, but at the same time a school of hammerheads wants you for lunch. If you like your adventures challenging and thought provoking, however, and you're in the mood for a good long quest, you absolutely, under no circumstances should miss this game. I've said it many times but I'll say it again: with games like this, Sega's future is rock solid, or in this case, water tight. **GR**

▸ TRIGUN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 96

Vash knows he can win the contest without breaking a sweat, but doing so will announce his identity to everyone.*Trigun* continues to tell short, solid, and self-contained stories that are all linked together following the travels of Vash the Humanoid Typhoon. Adding Nicholas Wolfwood to the mix has made this anime immensely more fun and interesting. Vash finally has a friend. Someone who seems to have almost as many demons in their past as he does. Together both of them may be able to help each other find what they are looking for. *Trigun* manages to mimic a tale of the old American west with that obvious Japanese flare, and penchant for destruction on an industrial strength scale. It keeps getting better with each new installment, so if you haven't seen it yet, go back and get the first two volumes. **GR**

▸ STAR DEMON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 94

spirituality, morality, and humanity, too. For story purists, *Star Demon* is solid stuff. Even if you don't remember the characters in this hidden classic, you will remember, despite their brief appearances, their human relations with one another, and the impact their exits leave on you. That's a level of craftsmanship, isn't it? When you care if a character dies? Using simple methods to preach deeper themes? Sometimes Go Nagai's sexual overtones are a cheap leash, but there's something deeper if you look. And in the final scene, when the audience finds itself caring about characters that had barely any screen time, it's whatever works. I think that does count for something. It's over a decade old, and I'm still watching it. **GR**

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As the first of PlayStation 2 games continues to surge roaring up to the launch, look for even more PS2 coverage in the October Gamers' Republic. Already on tap are Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2, Eternal Ring, Evergrace, G-Saviour, Ring of Red, Wild Wild Racing, and lots more on Armored Core 2, Orphen, Silent Scope, Live World Soccer, Surfroids, Bouncer, and of course...here comes Sonic and Dual Shock Ape for the ever-burgeoning Dreamcast pool. Look for the long-awaited D2 review (finally), Super Runabout, the amazing U.S. version of Jet Grind Radio, Spawn, and a few surprises. Look for another extra-special interview as well.

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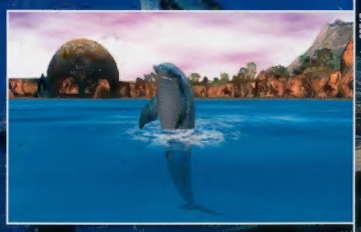
Suggestive Themes

You'll need skill, endurance and a reliable *blow*hole.



ecco THE DOLPHIN
DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE

Appaloosa Interactive

Sega Dreamcast
IT'S THINKING

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Stay away from jellyfish. Remember to come up for air. Don't eat bad fish. Or you could die. Of course, a shark could kill you too..On top of all that, the ocean's in a downward spiral and it's up to you to save it. Tough job, but you'll figure it out. You're the chosen one. The big fish (although you're not a fish). Too bad you can't even count on Greenpeace. The weight of the ocean rests on your dorsal fin.

EVERYONE
Animated Blood
ESRB

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